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Construction of dams have turned Sutlej into rivulet: SC
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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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INDIA DEFEATS BJP IN 10 OF 13 SEATS

BJP manages to bag 2 in Himachal & MP; Independent pockets 1 seat in Bihar

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

In a boost to the INDIA bloc, its constituents won 10 of the 13 Assembly seats where byelections were held in seven states. Meanwhile BJP managed to bag two and an Independent pocketed one seat.

Congress won four seats - two in BJP-ruled Uttarakhand and two in Himachal Pradesh. The TMC bagged all the four seats in West Bengal while AAP won the Jalandhar West seat in Punjab and the DMK emerged victorious in Vikravandi, Tamil Nadu.

BJP won the Hamirpur seat in Himachal Pradesh while Independent candidate Shankar Singh clinched the Rupauli seat in Bihar.

Voting was held in these seats on 10 July.

In Uttarakhand, Congress's Qazi Mohammad Nizamuddin won Manglaur for the fourth time edging out BJP's Kartar Singh Bhadana by 422 votes. Nizamuddin won the seat twice on a BSP ticket and once on a Congress ticket.

In Badrinath, Congress's Lakhapat Butola, a first-time contestant, scored an upset victory over former minister and MLA Rajendra Bhandari of BJP whose resignation as a legislator just before the Lok Sabha polls had necessitated the bypoll. Butola's victory margin was 5,224 votes.

Congress candidate Kamlesh Thakur, wife of Himachal Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, defeated BJP's Hoshiyar Singh to win Dehra by 9,399 votes. Hardeep Singh Bawa also defeated his nearest rival and BJP candidate KL Thakur in Nalagarh by 8,990 votes.

Congress's strength in the 68-member Assembly had dropped from 40 to 34 after six of its MLAs joined BJP. It has now regained the tally it secured in 2022, after winning four seats in bypolls -- held along with the Lok Sabha elections in June -- and two more it won on Saturday.

This is the first time in the electoral history of the state, a husband and wife, Sukhu and Kamlesh, would be members of the Assembly. In another first, there will not be a single Independent MLA in the Assembly. TMC continued its winning streak from the Lok Sabha elections by sweeping West Bengal bypolls, wresting Raiganj, Bagda and Ranaghat Dakshin seats from the BJP and securing a record victory margin in Maniktala.

In Punjab, Mohinder Bhagat of AAP won the Jalandhar seat by defeating BJP's Sheetal Angural by 37,325 votes.

In Madhya Pradesh, BJP's Kamlesh Pratap Shah won the Amarwara seat by a margin of 3,027 votes against Congress's Dheeran Sah Invati. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Congress workers celebrate after the victory of party candidate Lakhapat Singh Butola in Badrinath, in Uttarakhand on Saturday ***PHOTO: ANI***

> **The results of the by-elections in 7 states have made it clear that the web of fear and confusion woven by the BJP has been broken. Farmers, youth, labourers, businessmen and employed people want to completely destroy dictatorship**
> -Rahul Gandhi, Congress MP

AND THE WINNERS ARE...

Rupauli, Bihar: **Shankar Singh, IND**

Dehra, Himachal: **Kamlesh Thakur, Cong**

Hamirpur, Himachal: **Ashish Sharma, BJP**

Nalagarh, Himachal: **Hardeep Singh Bawa, Cong**

Jalandhar West, Punjab: **Mohinder Bhagat, AAP**

Vikravandi, TN: **Anniyur Siva, DMK**

Badrinath, U'khand: **Lakhapat Singh Butola, Cong**

Amarwara, MP: **Kamlesh Pratap Shah, BJP**

> **Three out of four seats were of BJP, which have now been won by TMC... This victory is the victory of the people. The trend is against BJP**
> -Mamata Banerjee, WB CM

Ranaghat Dakshin, WB: **Mukut Mani Adhikari, TMC**

Bagda, WB: **Madhuparna Thakur, TMC**

Maniktala, WB: **Supti Pandey, TMC**

Manglaur, U'khand: **Qazi Mohammad Nizamuddin, Cong**

Raiganj, WB: **Krishna Kalyani, TMC**

IN TN, DMK RETAINS VIKRAVANDI

The ruling DMK in Tamil Nadu emerged victorious in the bypoll to the Vikravandi Assembly seat by 67,757 votes and NDA constituent Pattali Makkal Katchi ended up runner-up with 56,296 votes. DMK's A Sivashanmugam was in the lead position and the margin between him and his nearest rival, PMK nominee C Anbumani widened round after round. By retaining the seat, DMK has continued to maintain its winning streak since the 2019 Lok Sabha election.

SOFTBANK EXITS PAYTM AT LOSS OF AROUND $150M

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Japan's Softbank investment arm Softbank Vision Fund exited from Paytm in the June quarter at a loss of around USD 150 million, sources aware of the development said.

Softbank invested about USD 1.5 billion in One97 Communications -- the owner of Paytm brand -- in tranches in 2017. "Softbank has exited Paytm at a loss of 10-12 per cent. The total loss is around USD 150 million," one of the sources said.

Softbank held around 18.5 per cent stake in Paytm before the company's initial public offering (IPO) in 2021. It held a 17.3 per cent stake through SVF India Holdings (Cayman) Ltd and 1.2 per cent through SVF Panther (Cayman) Ltd.

SVF Panther sold its entire stake during the IPO for Rs 1,689 crore, about USD 225 million. "Softbank announced that it will exit Paytm in 24 months from the time of the IPO. The exit was in line with Softbank's plan. However, the company did anticipate loss at that time," another source said.

Softbank had acquired Paytm shares at an average price of about Rs 800 apiece.

The share price of Paytm plummeted after the Reserve Bank of India banned its associate firm Paytm Payments Bank Ltd from carrying out transactions. It touched an all-time low of Rs 310 on 9 May.

Paytm reported widening of losses to Rs 550 crore in the fourth quarter of 2023-24 following the ban on transactions related to its payments bank. —*PTI*

NGT seeks satellite images of trees cut for UP Kanwar yatra

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Survey of India to file satellite images of the stretch on upper Ganga canal to find the extent of trees cut for the ongoing construction of a road in Uttar Pradesh for the Kanwar yatra. Under the yatra, during the month of Sawan, which begins on 22 July, pilgrims walk to Haridwar in Uttarakhand to collect water from the Ganga river and bring it back to be offered in Shiva temples. The NGT was hearing a matter regarding the alleged felling of more than 1 lakh trees and shrubs in the protected forest area across three forest divisions of Ghaziabad, Meerut, and Muzaffarnagar. A three-member bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava took note of the allegations. —*PTI*

India can't blame Pak for terror attacks: BJP MP

KATHUA, 13 JULY

Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Saturday said holding only Pakistan responsible for the recent spike in terror activities in Jammu and Kashmir is not sufficient as he called for self-introspection to end illegal activities, which benefit terrorism in the Union Territory. He was in Kathua, part of his Udhampur parliamentary constituency, to meet the public and resolve their issues. The terrorists carried out five attacks within a span of 30 days from 9 June in Reasi, Doda and Kathua districts in otherwise peaceful Jammu region, killing 15 people. Five terrorists were also killed by the security forces. —*PTI*

REORGANISATION ACT AMENDED

MHA gives J&K LG more powers over police, postings

NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR, 13 JULY

The Centre has strengthened the authority of the Lieutenant Governor (LG) in Jammu and Kashmir, empowering him to make decisions on crucial matters such as police, and all-India services officers and granting sanctions for prosecution in various cases.

Union Home Ministry gave more powers to the LG on Friday by amending rules framed under the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019. This act, passed alongside the abrogation of Article 370, bifurcated the erstwhile state into two Union Territories -- Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.In the past, proposals concerning police, public order, all-India services and the Anti-Corruption Bureau required approval from the finance department of Jammu and Kashmir before reaching the LG. Under the revised rules, such proposals must now be presented directly to the LG through the chief secretary of the Union territory. The LG's authority extends further to the appointment of the Advocate General and other law officers. These appointments, previously decided upon by the government, will now require

Following the Centre's move, decisions regarding prosecution sanctions and filing appeals will also come under the LG's purview. Additionally, matters related to prisons, the Directorate of Prosecution and the Forensic Science Laboratory will be handled directly by the LG. The LG's role in bureaucratic matters has also been amplified. Proposals for postings and transfers IAS and IPS officers, will be routed through the LG's office. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

J&K LG Manoj Sinha ***PHOTO: PTI***

MEHBOOBA, OTHERS ALLEGE 'HOUSE ARREST'

SRINAGAR, 13 JULY

Several political leaders in Jammu and Kashmir, including People's Democratic Party (PDP) chief Mehbooba Mufti, on Saturday claimed authorities have put them under house arrest to prevent them from visiting the 'martyrs' graveyard' to pay homage to the 22 Kashmiri people killed by the army of a Dogra ruler on this day in 1931.

Mehbooba, a former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, alleged that she was put under "house arrest" at her residence in Khimber in the outskirts of the city.

The gate of the residence of National Conference (NC)'s provincial president, Kashmir, Nasir Aslam Wani, was also locked by police.

He posted pictures and videos of the locked gates of his residence.

Members of the Apni Party, led by their president Altaf Bukhari, tried to march from the party's Sheikh Bagh office here to the graveyard, around 5km in Naqshband, but were stopped by police. —*PTI*

Court sends Nagendra to judicial custody till 18 July

BENGALURU, 13 JULY

A Bengaluru Court has granted judicial custody to former Karnataka minister B Nagendra in connection with the alleged Valmiki Corporation Scam till 18 July.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED), earlier in the day, arrested Nagendra in connection with the alleged multi-crore scam case. Soon after the arrest, he was produced before the Court in Bengaluru.

The ED detained the former Karnataka minister, followed by the raids by the central agency at many places on Wednesday linked to former Karnataka Minister B Nagendra and MLA Basanagouda Daddal in connection with the alleged embezzlement of funds in Valmiki Development Corporation.

B Nagendra ***PHOTO: PTI***

The corruption case of Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation came to light after an official of the Corporation died by suicide and left a note containing an allegation of multi-crore corruption in the corporation.

The official identified as Chandrasekaran, 45, a resident of the Kenchappa colony in Vinobanagar, allegedly died by suicide on 26 May after leaving a note containing an allegation of multi-crore corruption in the corporation. Chandrasekaran was a superintendent with the MVDC and was posted at its Bengaluru office. On 6 June, Nagendra said that he has voluntarily decided to resign as an investigation is going on over the allegations of illegal money transfer from Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation Ltd. He dismissed all the allegations against him and said that he'd come out clean after the investigation. —*ANI*

IN NOVEMBER

India to host 1st global summit for media

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

India will host the first World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit in November alongside the International Film Festival of India in Goa, with I&B Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw promising to strengthen the ecosystem for the protection of intellectual property rights in the media and entertainment sector.

Vaishnaw and Goa Chief Minister Pramod on Saturday made the announcement from 20-24 November and described it as a visionary initiative by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as India seeks to make a mark in the media and entertainment sector.

International Film Festival of India will be held from 20-28 November in Goa

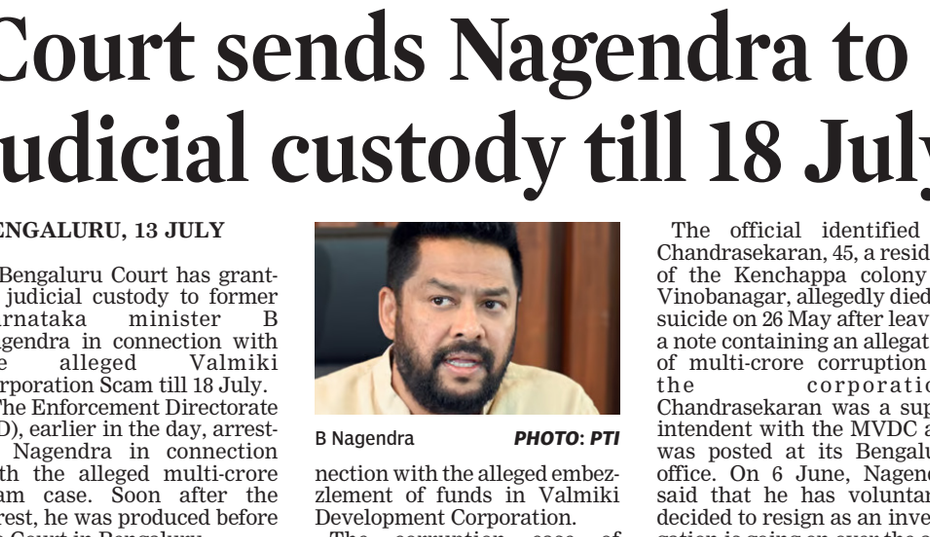
"IP rights hold huge value in the media and entertainment sector. We will be strengthening the ecosystem for protecting IP rights," Vaishnaw said in his address at the curtain raiser event for WAVES.

Vaishnaw said the government was also exploring ways to make available low-cost funds to the media and entertainment sector with learnings from the venture capital model.

"The media and entertainment (M&E) world is undergoing a structural change and has seen immense technology infusion. This has opened many opportunities, but also caused concerns among few participants who have not been able to keep up with the change," he said.

The media and entertainment sector is pegged at USD 27.5 billion in India and the government seeks to position WAVES as a platform to evoke ideas, fuel conversations, facilitate knowledge exchange and engage in meaningful collaborations with industry leaders from across the world. —*PTI*

I&B Ministry Secretary Sanjay Jaju and Chief Secretary of Goa Puneet Kumar Goel signed the MoU during the World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit 2024, in New Delhi on Saturday ***PHOTO: PTI***



Barbora Krejcikova wins the ladies singles title at Wimbledon 2024 after beating Jasmine Paolini 6-2, 2-6, 6-4 in the final in London on Saturday ***PHOTO: X/@WIMBLEDON*** ***>>>More on Page 8***

WIMBLEDON GETS A NEW QUEEN

B Krejčíková

	Match time: 2 Hours 6 Minutes	
6	Aces	**3**
4	Double faults	**1**
73	Win % on 1st serve	**61**
3/7	Break points	**2/6**
33	Receiving points won	**24**

J Paolini

Source: Wimbledon

PHOTO: SALAR

B'luru Archdiocese gets two new auxiliary bishops

BENGALURU, 13 JULY

The Archdiocese of Bengaluru has announced the appointment of two new auxiliary bishops: Fr Arokia Raj Satis Kumar and Fr Joseph Soosainathan. Kumar, 47, currently serves as the Chancellor of the Archdiocese. He studied Philosophy and Theology at St Joseph's Seminary in the Diocese of Mangaluru. He was ordained a priest on 2 May, 2007, for the Archdiocese of Bengaluru. He has held various roles including parish priest at St. Joseph, St. Francis Xavier's Cathedral, and Christ the King in Malleswaram (2007-2010). Soosainathan, 60, is the parish priest of the Sacred Heart Church. He studied philosophy at St. Peter's Pontifical Seminary and theology at St. Paul's Seminary in the Diocese of Tiruchirappalli. He was ordained a priest on 15 May, 1990, for the Archdiocese of Bengaluru. His past duties include serving as assistant parish priest at St. Joseph and St. Francis Xavier Cathedral (1990-1991) and as parish priest at St. Anne (1991-1997), St. John Evangelist (1997-2004), Our Lady of Fatima (2004-2010 and 2017-2020), St. Peter and Paul (2010-2017), and Sacred Heart (from 2020). The Archdiocese of Bengaluru has a Latin Catholic population of 360,561 across 134 parishes with 157 diocesan priests. It covers 27,014 sq km, including the civil districts of Bengaluru Urban, Bengaluru Rural, Chikkaballapur, Kolar, Ramanagara, and Tumakuru.

—Salar News

Three muggers arrested in Kalkere

BENGALURU, 13 JULY

Ramamurthy Nagar police have arrested three people involved in a series of mugging cases in the Kalkere and NRI Layout areas. On 7 July, a man travelling with a friend on a two-wheeler was accosted by three assailants who stole his Fastrack watch, and i-Tail mobile phone, and forced him to transfer Rs. 3,700 via PhonePe from the stolen phone. The victim immediately lodged a complaint with the police. Acting quickly, the police apprehended the suspects near Double Road in NRI Layout. The interrogation led to a confession and the recovery of several stolen items, including the getaway vehicle (a Bajaj Platina motorcycle), the victim's phone, a watch, and the money transferred through PhonePe. The police also seized an iPhone and a OnePlus mobile phone from the accused. The total value of the recovered items is estimated at Rs. 1.7 lakh. The suspects were produced before the court and are now under judicial custody. ***—Salar News***

HM says CBI, ED should not become political weapons

This comes after B Nagendra's arrest in Valmiki fund scam

BENGALURU, 13 JULY

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Saturday said central agencies like the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED) should not become "political weapons".

His comments come a day after the ED on Friday arrested former minister B Nagendra in connection with a money laundering probe linked to alleged irregularities in the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation Limited.

Following allegations against him in connection with the scam, Nagendra, who was the Scheduled Tribes Welfare Minister, had tendered his resignation on 6 June.

G Parameshwara ***PHOTO PTI***

"I have said that ED is probing him (Nagendra), based on the information they get, they will take action. Based on the information they have, he has been arrested. These procedures happen in accordance with the law, but this should not be used politically," Parameshwara said.

The ED had earlier this week carried out searches at several places, including at the premises of Nagendra, and ruling Congress MLA Basanagouda Daddal, who is Chairman of the Corporation.

> **I have said that ED is probing him, based on the information they get, they will take action. Based on the information they have, he has been arrested. These procedures happen in accordance with the law, but this should not be used politically**
>
> —G Parameshwara, Home Minister

The agency covered around 20 locations in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Maharashtra as part of a case registered under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the sources said.

Asked whether he felt Narendra's arrest was politically motivated, by using ED, Parameshwara said, "we don't have any objection to the probe... we too had constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT). SIT has recorded statements from Nagendra and Daddal, their investigation too is on."

The illegal money transfer issue involving the Corporation, came to the fore after its accounts superintendent, Chandrasekharan P died by suicide on 26 May.

He left behind a note claiming unauthorised transfer of Rs 187 crore belonging to the Corporation from its bank account. Funds to the tune of Rs 88.62 crore were illegally moved to various accounts allegedly to "well-known" IT companies and a cooperative bank among others. *—PTI*

FARMERS SLAM GOVT

Petitions given to CM found in garbage

BENGALURU, 13 JULY

- Videos of the petitions dumped in the garbage pile have been widely shared on social media platforms

Petitions submitted to Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah by farmers in Chamarajanagara were allegedly found near a garbage pile drawing sharp reactions from farmers' groups and the opposition BJP.

These petitions were reportedly submitted to Siddaramaiah during his visit to the district on 10 July where Congress had organised a thanksgiving programme after winning the Lok Sabha seat.

Videos of the petitions dumped in the garbage pile have been widely shared on social media platforms.

According to a farmer leader, on 10 July, Siddaramaiah had come to attend a meeting in Chamarajanagara where farmer groups submitted petitions to him on behalf of the entire district regarding the problems faced by them.

BJP State President BY Vijayendra slammed Congress and urged Siddaramaiah to take moral responsibility of the incident.

Taking to social media platform 'X', he posted, "Hoping that their issues will be resolved by the Chief Minister, people come from far off places, stand in queue and submit him petitions. This shows Congress government's brazenness towards public complaints and concerns.

—PTI

HDK accuses CM of 'misusing power'

BENGALURU, 13 JULY

Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy accused Chief Minister Siddaramaiah of "misuse of power" following allegations against him in connection with alleged fraudulent allotment of sites to land losers by MUDA, which involves plots given to his wife Parvathi, on Saturday.

Pointing out that Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) scam case directly involves CM's family, he requested any respected lawyer in the state to take this case before the Governor and seek prosecution sanction, and to take it before court.

"Several scams of this State government, one after the other, have become a topic of discussion across the country. There is negative feeling about this administration in Karnataka outside the State, after Congress came to power, and it is painful," JD(S) leader said.

Hitting out at Siddaramaiah for playing the backward class community card, he asked, "What have you done for the backward classes to take protection in the name of the community?"

"People have given you power, don't take a bad name and go at the last stage (of your political career), give a respectable administration. You are trying to take protection in the name of backward classes, but you are running an administration that would bring a bad name for the backward classes communities," he told Siddaramaiah.

> **Several scams of this State government, one after the other, have become a topic of discussion across the country. There is negative feeling about this administration in Karnataka outside the State, after Congress came to power, and it is painful**
>
> —HD Kumaraswamy, Union Minister

Denying the allegations against him in connection with the MUDA scam, Siddaramaiah on Thursday had claimed that a conspiracy is being hatched against him out of heartburn as he belongs to the backward class community and has become the chief minister for a second time.

Pointing out that following the allegations, CM is now saying his family doesn't want alternative sites given to his wife in lieu of 3.16 acres of her land acquired by MUDA, and that they be paid Rs 62 crore as compensation as per rules, Kumaraswamy asked "whose land is it? Is it the ancestral property by CM or his brother-in-law?

—PTI

'SOLUTION WILL BE SERVED'

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah meets specially-abled Congress and civic workers at KPCC office on Saturday. The workers have put forward their demands of being provided with 3-wheelers, government jobs and loan facilities. CM assured them of a resolution for their grievances and has given a notice to the officials to help resolve the various grievances of the people ***PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD***

Kenyan arrested at City airport with cocaine worth Rs 30 crore

BENGALURU, 13 JULY

A Kenyan national was arrested at the international airport here after she was allegedly found in possession of cocaine worth Rs 30 crore, officials said on Saturday.

The arrest was made based on specific intelligence received by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) of Bengaluru zonal unit, they said.

According to officials, the Kenyan national who travelled from Doha to Bengaluru on Friday by an Indigo flight was intercepted at Bengaluru airport by officers of DRI after elaborate surveillance.

On detailed examination of the passenger's baggage, packets containing off-white coloured powdered substance, weighing 3kg valued at 30 crore were found to be concealed in the false bottom of the check-in luggage, a senior official said.

In another incident, sleuths of DRI intercepted two Indian women passengers at Bengaluru International Airport coming from Bangkok, on 5 July, who were suspected to be carrying contraband items.

On systematic search of their bags, they were found to contain silver coloured packets. A greenish substance in lumpy form was recovered from all the packets. "The packets weighing 3.2kg, valued at Rs 3 crore have been seized and the passengers were arrested and remanded to judicial custody, under provisions of NDPS Act," *—PTI*

COPS TO CRACK DOWN ON TRAFFIC VIOLATORS IN CITY

BENGALURU, 13 JULY

To improve pedestrian and motorist safety, City Traffic Police launched a series of special operations across divisions, cracking down on violations.

The Traffic East Division focused on improving pedestrian safety by acting against shop owners who encroach on footpaths on major roads such as Domlur Road, Halasuru Main Road, Indiranagar 100 Feet Road, and Old Madras Road. Over 100 billboards placed on footpaths were confiscated and police have registered 26 cases under the Karnataka Police Act and warned of legal action under Section 126 BNSS for repeated offenders.

Pulakeshinagar Traffic Police focused on curbing dangerous driving practices, particularly two-wheeler riders performing stunts like wheeling on Promenade Road. The operation resulted in the seizure of several vehicles and FIRs lodged. *—Salar News*

GIRL ATTEMPTS SUICIDE AFTER DAD CIRCULATES HER PRIVATE VIDEOS

UDUPI, 13 JULY

A woman has lodged a complaint against her husband for allegedly circulating private videos of their 18-year-old daughter on social media platforms, police said on Saturday.

Following her father's act, the daughter tried to end her life by allegedly consuming Phenyle. She has been admitted to the government hospital in Udupi and is stated to be in critical condition, they said.

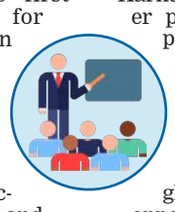
According to the complaint, the girl's father, was not happy with his daughter for allegedly being in love with a relative from Thirthahalli. He called her boyfriend home, beat him up, and forcibly downloaded all private videos and photos from his phone and allegedly circulated them on social media.

After that, he allegedly beat up both his daughter and his wife, following which both of them got injured. Unable to bear the shame that the viral videos had brought to her, the girl allegedly attempted to end her life on Friday. *—PTI*

India's 1st academic course for SMEs launched in City

BENGALURU, 13 JULY

Bengaluru Chamber of Industry and Commerce (BCIC) along with other major Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME) associations of the State signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Jagdish Sheth School of Management (JAGSoM) to launch the country's first Academic Program for SMEs in the City on Saturday.



The primary objective of the MoU is to design and promote exclusive academic programs tailored to train candidates in effectively managing Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The MoU was signed in the presence of Shobha Karandlaje, Minister for MSME & Labour and Employment and Dr CN Manjunath, Member of Parliament.

The academic program for SMEs includes a Post Graduate Diploma in Management for SMEs (PGDM – 2 years) and Management and Business Administration of SMEs (MBAS – 1 year).

Major MSME associations, who signed the MoU along with BCIC included Peenya Industries Association (PIA), Karnataka Small Scale Industries Association (KASSIA), and Laghu Udyog Bharati (LUB).

According to a press release, Shobha Karandlaje said, "Karnataka has set yet another precedent through this pioneering SME management program. It is a testament to the industry's commitment to nurture this vital sector. I request all MSMEs to think global as there is a huge opportunity worldwide for the growth of this sector."

Speaking on the occasion, Manjunath said, "Micro changes bring macro transformation and this is the greatest strength of the MSME sector. The collaboration between industry associations and academic institutions will ensure that our SMEs are equipped with the skills and knowledge to sustain and grow in today's environment." *—Salar News*

FURTHER EXPANSION UNDERWAY

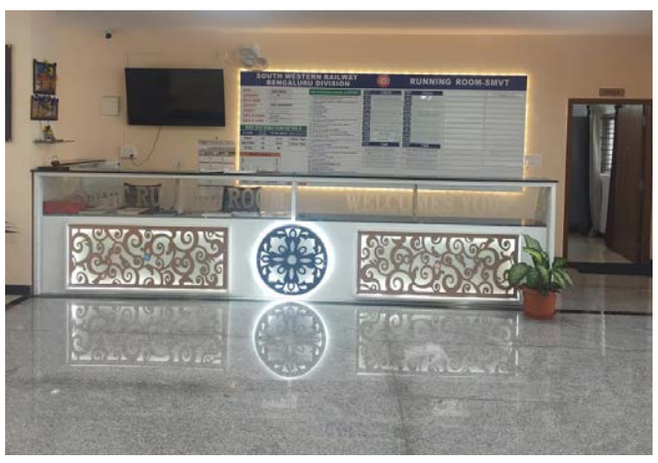
Railway staff to get AC lounges, resting rooms in City

BENGALURU, 13 JULY

In recognition of the critical role played by running staff in ensuring smooth train services, the South Western Railway (SWR) Bengaluru Division is making improvements to the facilities available to them.

These upgrades and expansions target the resting rooms used by train crew members, including drivers and train managers (guards).

The improvements include well-equipped lounges offering air conditioning, subsidised and packed meals for staff starting shifts at odd hours. Each room features a crew lobby with essential train operation information, restrooms with air conditioning, RO water purifiers and solar heaters. To unwind, staff can enjoy recreational facilities such as foot massagers, chess boards, and carom boards. Additionally, washing machines, microwave ovens, refrigerators, and gyms are included as amenities.



The improvements include well-equipped lounges, gym facilities, subsidised and packed meals for staff starting shifts at odd hours ***PHOTOS: SALAR***

"Our running staffs are the backbone of railway operations," Public Relations Officer (PRO) for the Bengaluru Division Trinetra KR told Salar News.

"We are committed to providing them with the best possible facilities to ensure their comfort and efficiency," he said.

Speaking to Salar News, Nagaraju PR, a loco pilot with SWR for nearly 10 years said, "We appreciate the railway's efforts in providing such extensive facilities. Many of us, including myself, come from faraway places and rarely get to go home. These improvements will enhance our work environment, and job satisfaction, and make us feel more at home."

Currently, the Bengaluru Division operates four running rooms across four railway stations: KSR, SMVT, Yeswanthpur, and Bangarapet, accommodating 191 staff members.

Plans are underway for a major expansion, with 14 new running rooms and an additional 505 beds proposed across the SWR network. Additionally, eight more running rooms with 274 beds are slated for future sanction.

—Salar News

Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat took to skies to experienec Skydiving on World Skydiving Day, in Narnaul, on Saturday. He also flagged off an aircraft that will be used for skydiving, said to be the first such aircraft in the country
PHOTO: PTI

Pilot vehicle of Haryana minister overturns; 1 injured

KURUKSHETRA, 13 JULY

A pilot vehicle of Haryana Minister Subhash Sudha on Saturday overturned here, leaving a police commando injured, police said. The accident took place when the minister was going from Chandigarh to Mahendragarh, they said. The pilot vehicle overturned on an express highway seven kilometres from Pehowa, police said. It overturned after one of its tyres burst and its axle broke down, police said. The injured commando was initially admitted to a hospital in Pehowa and later referred to LNJP Hospital in Kurukshetra. He had fractured an arm, police added. ***—PTI***

PHOTO: PTI

SC defers hearing bail plea of Balaji to 22 July

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

The Supreme Court has adjourned the hearing on a bail plea of former Tamil Nadu minister V Senthil Balaji to 22 July, who was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case last year. A bench of Justice Abhay S Oka and Justice Augustine George Masih on Friday deferred the matter due to paucity of time. The top court on 1 April sought a response from the ED on Balaji's bail plea while issuing notice to the agency. Dismissing Balaji's bail petition, the Madras High Court on 28 February said it would send a wrong signal if he is let out on bail in a case of this nature and it will be against the larger public interest. Balaji was arrested on 14 June last year in connection with a money laundering case linked to a cash-for-jobs scam when he was the transport minister during the AIADMK government. On 12 August last year, the ED filed a 3,000-page charge sheet against him. On October 19, the high court dismissed Balaji's earlier bail plea. A local court had also dismissed his bail petitions thrice. ***—PTI***

Apni Party leaders denied access to martyrs graveyard

SRINAGAR, 13 JULY

Police on Saturday stopped leaders of the Apni Party from visiting the "martyrs' graveyard" here to pay homage to 22 Kashmiri people who were killed by the army of a Dogra ruler on this day in 1931, officials said. Members of the Apni Party, led by their president Altaf Bukhari, tried to march from the party's Sheikh Bagh office here to the graveyard, around 5 km in Naqshband, but were stopped by police, they said. Later, the leaders held "fateh" prayers on the road and paid tributes to the 22 Kashmiris. 13 July used to be a public holiday in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir and a grand official function was held every year on this day where the chief minister or the governor would be the chief guest. However, the administration dropped the day from the list of gazetted holidays in 2020, after the abrogation of article 370 and splitting of the state into two union territories -- Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh -- by the Centre in 201. Mainstream political leaders also used to visit the "martyrs' graveyard" to pay homage. ***—PTI***

TMC steamrolls Oppn in WB Assembly bypolls, continues victory streak

In a major defeat for BJP, TMC won all four Assembly seats it fought in

TMC workers celebrate after party's victory in West Bengal Assembly by-elections, in Ranaghat on Saturday ***PHOTO: PTI***

KOLKATA, 13 JULY

Trinamool Congress (TMC) continued its winning streak from the recent Lok Sabha elections by sweeping the West Bengal assembly bypolls on Saturday, wresting Raiganj, Bagda, and Ranaghat Dakshin seats from the BJP and securing a record victory margin in Maniktala.TMC candidates Krishna Kalyani, Madhuparna Thakur and Mukut Mani Adhikari won the Raiganj, Bagda, and Ranaghat Dakshin seats respectively, while Supti Pandey won in the Maniktala segment in Kolkata.The bypolls in the four Assembly seats were held on 10 July.BJP secured the second position in all four seats, while the Left-Congress alliance was a distant third and also lost deposits in two assembly segments. In Raiganj in Uttar Dinajpur district, Kalyani won by a margin of 50,077 votes over his nearest BJP rival Manas Kumar Ghosh.

Madhuparna Thakur, won by a margin of 33,455 votes over her rival Binay Kumar Biswas of the BJP in the Bagda assembly seat in North 24 Parganas district. *—PTI*

Punjab bypoll: AAP defeats BJP in Jalandhar West seat

CHANDIGARH, 13 JULY

Punjab's ruling party AAP retained the Jalandhar West assembly seat on Saturday as its candidate Mohinder Bhagat defeated BJP's Sheetal Angural by a margin of 37,325 votes in a bypoll.

Bhagat polled 55,246 votes while Angural secured 17,921 votes, according to officials. Congress nominee Surinder Kaur, who was at the third spot, got 16,757 votes.

Celebrations broke out at the residence of Bhagat in Jalandhar as his family members and supporters were ecstatic over the victory in the reserve assembly constituency. With this victory, AAP will now have 91 MLAs in the 117-member Punjab assembly.

On his victory, Bhagat, 66, said voters gave their mandate in favour of the AAP because of the works undertaken by the Bhagwant Mann-led dispensation. *—PTI*

Kamlesh Thakur polled 32,737 votes in the bypoll against 23,338 votes polled by BJP candidate Hoshiyar Singh ***PHOTO: SCREENGRAB***

HP CM's wife Kamlesh wins Dehra Assembly seat

SHIMLA, 13 JULY

Congress won the Dehra Assembly seat for the first time on Saturday with its candidate Kamlesh Thakur, the wife of Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, defeating BJP candidate Hoshiyar Singh by a margin of 9,399 votes.

Thakur polled 32,737 votes in the bypoll against 23,338 votes polled by Singh. The three Independent candidates in this seat could not get even 200 votes each.

Of the 86,520 voters in this assembly segment, 65.42 per cent exercised their franchise on July 10.

Dehra Assembly constituency was carved out after a delimitation exercise in 2012. Senior BJP leader and former minister Ravi Inder Singh was elected from the seat in 2012. Hoshiyar Singh won the seat as an Independent in 2017 and 2022. *—PTI*

After losing Ayodhya, BJP fails to win Manglaur, Badrinath

DEHRADUN, 13 JULY

Congress on Saturday won both the assembly seats in Uttarakhand where bypolls were held, snatching the Manglaur constituency from BSP and retaining Badrinath by defeating BJP.

Congress's Qazi Mohammad Nizamuddin won the seat for the fourth time edging out BJP's Kartar Singh Bhadana by a narrow margin of 422 votes. Nizamuddin won the seat twice on a BSP ticket and once on a Congress ticket in the past.

The BSP, which had won the seat in the 2022 assembly polls, was relegated to the third position.

Ubaidur Rahman, the son of former BSP MLA Sarwat Karim Ansari, whose death last October necessitated the bypoll, got 19,559 votes against Nizamuddin's 31,727 votes and Bhadana's 31,305 votes.

Congress held the Badrinath seat where Rajendra Bhandari had defeated state BJP president Mahendra Bhatt in 2022.

The Manglaur seat has always been won either by the Congress or BSP while before this bypoll, the BJP had been at the third or fourth spot.

BJP has promoted spiritual tourism in the area, leading to overcrowding of the hill station and and environmental disaster. *—PTI*

Uproar over move to give more powers to J&K Lt Guv

SRINAGAR, 13 JULY

Political parties in Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday voiced their strong opposition to the Centre's move to vest more powers in the Union Territory's Lieutenant Governor for taking decisions on matters related to police and all-India service officers.

While main regional outfits-the National Conference (NC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) -- said the decision would "disempower" the people of Jammu and Kashmir, Congress termed it as the "murder of democracy" and the Apni Party urged all parties to shun differences and unitedly protest against the move.

NC Vice President Omar Abdullah said the people of Jammu and Kashmir deserve better than a "powerless, rubber stamp" chief minister who will have to beg the Lieutenant Governor to get a peon appointed. The former chief minister of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, however, said the move was "another indicator that elections are around the corner in J&K". NC Chief Spokesperson Tanvir Sadiq termed the decision "a blatant misuse of power" by BJP-led government at the Centre to "disempower" the people. "It is aimed only at weakening the democratic voice of the people of J&K. The Central government's preference of granting powers to an unelected lieutenant governor instead of an elected government is a clear attempt to undermine the future of a democratically elected government in J&K," he said.

Sadiq said the order shows how non-serious Delhi is to empower the people of Jammu and Kashmir. *—PTI*

> **Modi government's betrayal of Jammu and Kashmir continues unabated! The insertion of new sections giving more powers to the LG means that the Modi gvovernment wants to delay the restoration of full statehood to Jammu and Kashmir**
>
> -Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress President

MEETING ALLIES

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren along with his wife Kalpana Murmu Soren met senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi in New Delhi on Saturday; Soren and his wife with Sunita Kejriwal, wife of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, and AAP leader Sanjay Singh. During the meeting the Chief Minister extended his full support to Arvind, his family and AAP in the fight against the "atrocities" ***PHOTO: PTI***

BRS MLA Arekapudi Gandhi joins Congress

HYDERABAD, 13 JULY

PHOTO: PTI

BRS MLA Arekapudi Gandhi joined the Congress in Telangana on Saturday, taking the total number of Opposition legislators who switched over to the ruling party to nine.

Gandhi, elected from Serilingampally here, was welcomed into Congress fold by Chief Minister and PCC President A Revanth Reddy. Along with Gandhi, BRS corporators in Hyderabad Nagender Yadav, Uppalapati Srikanth, Manjula Raghunath Reddy, Narne Srinivas also defected to the Congress.

Speculation is rife that more BRS MLAs would join the ruling party in the days to come. BRS had won 39 of the total 119 Assembly constituencies in the elections held last year, while Congress came to power winning 64 seats. *—PTI*

Indian ship takes food items to Maldives

MALE, 13 JULY

The first shipment carrying 150 tonnes of perishable food items from India to a port at Addu is set to reduce the cost and complexity of imports into the southern atolls of Maldives, according to media reports here.

An Indian ship carrying fresh fruits, vegetables, onions, garlic, and eggs had set sail from Tuticorin Port and reached Hithadhoo Port at Addu, the southernmost atoll of this archipelagic nation, late on Wednesday night.

It will be operated by Kerala-based Finesse Group, which is the largest supplier of fruits and vegetables. *—PTI*

Modi launches projects worth ₹29,400 crore in Mumbai

MUMBAI, 13 JULY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched and laid the foundation stone of various projects worth more than Rs 29,400 crores in Mumbai on Saturday.

Modi was felicitated by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy Chief Ministers Devendra Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar at the NESCO Exhibition Centre, Goregaon in Mumbai.

The Prime Minister laid the foundation stone for tunnel work at the Goregaon Mulund Link Road (GMLR) Project, worth over Rs 6,300 crore.

The GMLR envisages road connectivity from the Western Express Highway at Goregaon to the Eastern Express Highway at Mulund.

Prime Minister Modi also laid the foundation stone for the Kalyan Yard Remodelling and Gati Shakti Multi-Modal Cargo Terminal at Turbhe in Navi Mumbai. The Kalyan Yard will help in the segregation of long-distance and suburban traffic.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for tunnel work at the Goregaon Mulund Link Road Project, worth over Rs 6,300 crore ***PHOTO: PTI***

The Prime Minister also dedicated to the nation the new platforms at Lokmanya Tilak Terminus and the extension of Platforms No. 10 and 11 at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus Station. The new, longer platforms at Lokmanya Tilak Terminus can accommodate longer trains, allowing for more passengers per train and improving the station's capacity to handle increased traffic. Prime Minister Modi also launched the Mukhyamantri Yuva Karya Prashikshan Yojana with an outlay of around Rs 5,600 crore. This transformative internship programme aims to address youth unemployment by providing opportunities for skill enhancement and industry exposure for youth aged 18 to 30 years.

He also said that as per a report by the RBI, eight crore new jobs were made available in the country in the last three to four years. *—ANI/PTI*

DEFENCE MINISTER SINGH DISCHARGED FROM HOSPITAL

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, who was admitted to AIIMS Delhi following a complaint of back pain, has been discharged from the hospital, the hospital said on Saturday.

Singh was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) on Thursday morning after he complained of back pain. Singh turned 73 on Wednesday. Singh is heading the Ministry of Defence for the second time in a row. He also served as Union Home Minister in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first term in 2014.

He served as a member of the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly in 1977-1980 and 2001-2003. He was Minister of Education in the government of Uttar Pradesh from 1991 to 1992, while also serving as Minister of Surface Transport in the Union Cabinet from 1999 to 2000. Later, he was Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh in 2000-2002. *—ANI*

POLITICAL WRANGLING

'Vijayan taking credit for Vizhinjam Port'

ERNAKULAM, 13 JULY

Launching a scathing attack on the Kerala government for not inviting him to the inauguration of the Vizhinjam Port, Leader of Opposition, VD Satheesan, said that in 2015, his government had inaugurated the construction and now Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan is trying to take credit.

Satheesan said, "The Vizhinjam Port is a reality, after six months, it will be commissioned. The Opposition of Kerala is celebrating this day because it is our 'baby'. We have been trying to make this port since last 3 decades. We started this project in 1991 when K Karunakaran was the chief minister, unfortunately, we couldn't complete it. We inaugurated the construction in 2015. For the last 8 years, the present government didn't take any initiative to make any road or rail connectivity and now Pinarayi Vijayan's government is trying to take credit."

Leader of Opposition, VD Satheesan, said that in 2015, Congress government had inaugurated the construction of the port ***PHOTO: ANI***

Meanwhile, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan welcomed the first mothership, "San Fernando " at the Vizhinjam International Seaport in Kerala on Friday.

Welcoming the ship, Vijayan highlighted that India had now entered the global map through Vizhinjam port and called it a proud moment for India. Vizhinjam seaport is very close to the famous Kovalam beach. It has water connectivity to many regional and international ports. This is the first transhipment port in the country. Till now India was dependent on Colombo, Dubai and Singapore ports for transhipment. *—ANI*

Venugopal says BJP has planted spyware in his phone

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Congress General Secretary KC Venugopal on Saturday accused the Modi government of targeting his phone with a "malicious spyware" and asserted that "we will oppose this blatantly unconstitutional act" and breach of privacy.

Venugopal shared the screenshot of a message purportedly from Apple which said that "you are being targeted by a mercenary spyware attack that is trying to remotely compromise the iPhone associated with your Apple ID".

The message of the Lok Sabha elections was that the people reject any attack on the Constitution and the "BJP's fascist agenda", he said.

The message purportedly from Apple, whose screenshot Venugopal shared, stated that Apple had previously sent him a notification on 30 October, 2023 but this was not a repeat notice and was to inform him that another attack against his device had been detected.

"Apple detected that you are being targeted by a mercenary spyware attack that is trying to remotely compromise the iPhone associated with your Apple ID'¦This attack is likely targeting you specifically because of who you are or what you do.

Although it's never possible to achieve absolute certainty when detecting such attacks, Apple has high confidence in this warning '" please take it seriously," the message read. *—PTI*

Bihar youth waves Palestinian flag; probe on

DARBHANGA, 13 JULY

Bihar Police on Saturday launched an investigation after a video purportedly showing a youth waving a Palestinian flag at a Muharram procession in Darbhanga district went viral on social media. A youth was seen waving a Palestinian flag during the Muharram procession in Kilaghat locality on Friday, Munna Khan, head of district Muharram committee told reporters. The moment it was noticed by the committee members, the Palestinian flag was immediately seized, he said. The matter has been brought to the notice of the district police which has started its investigation. The video of this incident is being examined", said Jagunath Reddy, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Darbhanga. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Women workers unearth jewels, coins in Kerala

KANNUR, 13 JULY

A group of women labourers never imagined that they would unearth a "treasure trove", which they opened after gathering much courage. This is exactly what happened when the daily wage workers dug up a rainwater harvesting pit at a private rubber plantation in Chengalayi in this district on Thursday. The container they stumbled upon was filled with precious jewels and old coins, which is considered to be of great value. To their surprise, gold and silver coins, precious beads, "pathakka" (lockets) and so on came out of it, she said. A police official, who reached the area for further inspection, on Saturday said all the unearthed articles were produced before the court. —*PTI*

U'khand gets 1st rhododendron garden in country

PITHORAGARH, 13 JULY

The country's first rhododendron garden with 35 species of the flower, including five that are only available in Uttarakhand, has been developed in Munsiyari village here, officials said on Saturday. The Uttarakhand Forest Department's research wing set up the garden with the objective of preserving the "fascinating" plant species for further scientific research and to raise awareness among people of its ecological as well as economic significance, a senior official said. Rhododendron arboreum is a widely loved variety. It is the state tree of Uttarakhand, National tree of Nepal, and state flower of Nagaland," Forest Department's chief conservator and head of the research wing Sanjeev Chaturvedi said. —*PTI*

DDA postpones demolition drive near Yamuna River

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) will not be carrying out the demolition drive against encroachment on the Yamnua flood plain near south of Majnu Ka Tila gurdwara on Saturday and Sunday, sources said. No immediate reason was cited for this. The DDA, in a public notice released on Thursday, said that it will undertake a demolition drive in the area on 13 and 14 July. Residents of Majnu Ka Tila, where Pakistani Hindus are staying, said they received the notice from the land owning agency late Thursday evening. The DDA asked the residents to vacate the area by Friday. The notice referred to the National Green Tribunal's 3 April order and the Delhi High Court's 12 March order behind the move. —*PTI*

Construction of dams have turned Sutlej into rivulet: SC

SC judge Sanjoy Karol said it alters the entire ecosystem

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Supreme Court judge Justice Sanjay Karol has said the construction of dams on the Sutlej has turned the trans-Himalayan river into a rivulet, altering the entire ecosystem and eco chain.

Speaking at the launch of a book titled "Climate Change: The Policy, Law and Practice" by lawyer Jatinder (Jay) Cheema on Friday, Justice Karol also highlighted that climate change is heavily impacting the agriculture sector in the country.

The Supreme Court judge noted that stretches of certain rivers are drying up due to rising temperatures and human activity.

Justice Karol said successive governments have spent Rs 30,000 crore on cleaning the Ganga. "We know the current state. We have all seen it. A lot more needs to be done on this issue. The famous Gangetic river dolphins, unfortunately, are nowhere to be seen." He added that farming has suffered due to the erosion of climate stability over the years.

Supreme Court judge said that stretches of certain rivers are drying up due to rising temperatures and human activity *PHOTO: PTI*

"With nearly 58 per cent of the Indian population relying on agriculture and its allied activities for their livelihood, and even while other sectors have seen tremendous growth, agriculture retains its predominance. While India accomplished the noteworthy milestone of self-reliance in the 1970s with the Green Revolution and now produces an adequate amount of foodgrain for its entire population, farming in India is embroiled in a host of socio-economic and environmental issues," he said.

"Owing to climate change, India's agricultural yield is said to have reduced. Other factors leading to the erosion of farming conditions and agricultural produce include the adoption of unsustainable practices such as the use of heavy chemical fertilisers --we have seen what is happening in Punjab -- over-irrigation, and excessive groundwater extraction," Justice Karol said.

Citing an example of climate impact on agriculture, the judge said that the cultivation of renowned "paan" (betel) leaves in Bihar has taken a significant hit, with temperatures rising to nearly 50 degrees Celsius.

Justice KV Viswanathan said climate change is a serious existential threat and called for the establishment of a permanent commission in India, similar to NITI Aayog, to find a comprehensive solution to the problem.

—*PTI*

RAIN ALERT IN 23 STATES

Clockwise from top left: Students on way home from school use a raincoat to shield themselves as heavy rains lash Mumbai; Newly-built national highway collapses in Bongaigaon, Assam due to heavy rain; Heavy rains lash parts of Himachal Pradesh and 15 roads are closed in the state, officials said on Saturday. There is 5-day heavy rain alert in 23 states *PHOTO: PTI/ANI*

WHY ONLY TO GRIEVE?

HC says parole can be granted for happy occasion

MUMBAI, 13 JULY

The Bombay High Court has granted parole to a man to bid farewell to his son, who is going to Australia for further studies, holding that if parole can be granted to share grief, it can also be for a happy occasion.

The court said conditional release for a brief time is allowed to convicts to let them be in touch with the outside world and to arrange for their family affairs as though behind bars, the convict continues to be someone's son, husband, father or brother.

A division bench of Justices Bharati Dangre and Manjusha Deshpande in its order of 9 July said the provisions of parole and furlough have been time and again looked towards as a "humanistic approach" towards the convicts.

The court was hearing a petition filed by one Vivek Shrivastav seeking parole to arrange the tuition fees and other expenses for his son's education at an Australian university and to also bid farewell to him.

The prosecution opposed the plea claiming that parole is normally given in emergency situations. Arranging money for education and bidding son farewell are not grounds on which parole should be given, it said.

The court granted Shrivastav parole for 10 days. Shrivastav was convicted in a 2012 murder case and is serving his life sentence. He was convicted in 2018 and he filed an appeal in HC against his conviction in 2019.

PHOTO: PTI

> **Unless and until the father is available to arrange for this amount, his young son may lose a chance and the offer which he has received**
>
> -Bombay High Court

As per his plea, his son has been selected for a course in Australia for which tuition fees of Rs 36 lakh have to be deposited along with travelling and stay expenses. Shrivastav sought release on parole for a month to arrange the money and help out his family.

It added that as per the Rules, parole is not just granted in cases of emergencies but also to attend happy occasions or to cater to the needs of family members. —*PTI*

Case registered over obscene comments on Anshuman's wife

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Delhi police have registered a First Information Report (FIR) against a Delhi resident for making "lewd and derogatory" comments online against the widow of Kirti Chakra awardee Captain Anshuman Singh.

The police took cognisance of the National Commission for Women (NCW) letter to the Delhi Commissioner of Police demanding arrest of the man and submit a detailed report to the panel within three days.

Police said that a complaint was received from the National Commission of Women, alleging that a social media user had made an extremely lewd and derogatory comment on a picture of the widow of a late soldier.

The commission stated that the man made the comment that contravenes Section 79 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, and Section 67 of the Information Technology Act, 2000. "NCW condemns this behaviour and urges immediate police action," the women's panel said on X.

—*ANI*

4 kids die of Chandipura virus infection in Gujarat

HIMATNAGAR, 13 JULY

Four children have died and two others are undergoing treatment in Gujarat's Sabarkantha district for suspected infection of Chandipura virus, an official said on Saturday.

The two children are being treated at the civil hospital at Himmatnagar in the district.

Of the four children who have died so far, one was from Sabarkantha district and two were from neighbouring Aravalli district. The fourth child hailed from Rajasthan.

Chandipura virus causes fever, with symptoms similar to flu, and acute encephalitis (inflammation of brain). The pathogen is a member of the Vesiculovirus genus of the family Rhabdoviridae. It is transmitted by vectors like mosquitoes, ticks and sandflies. Blood samples of all six kids have been sent to the National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune for confirmation and their results are awaited, Sabarkantha Chief District Health Officer Raj Sutariya said. Paediatricians at the Himmatnagar civil hospital had suspected the role of the Chandipura virus after four children died there on 10 July, he said. Two other children from Rajasthan admitted to the hospital have displayed similar symptoms. To curb the infection, the district authorities have deployed teams to conduct preventive measures, including dusting to kill sandflies, officials said. —*PTI*

Manipur violence: ITLF seeks Home Minister's help

IMPHAL, 13 JULY

Manipur-based Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) on Saturday wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, expressing serious concerns regarding the alleged heavy-handed actions against Kuki-Zo village volunteers by central agencies amid ongoing ethnic conflicts.

The letter strongly condemned multiple incidents, particularly in Jiribam's Phaitol and Mongbung villages, where it was reported that central security forces allegedly assaulted seven Kuki women and detained two village youths.

They also highlighted the arrest of three Kuki-Zo volunteers following an arson attack, along with allegations of burning residences belonging to community leaders, which have further escalated local tensions.

The forum also claimed that five Kuki women were physically assaulted, necessitating their hospitalisation, and alleged that security forces set fire to the residence of the general secretary of the Kuki Inpi (Jiribam, Noney, and Tamenglong).

These allegations come in the wake of operations by security forces at Phaitol and L Hengjol villages in Kangpokpi district on 8 and 9 July, resulting in the arrest of three militants and seizure of three AK series rifles along with 1,300 rounds of ammunition. —*PTI*

Death of tribal youth causes tension in Tripura

DHALAI, 13 JULY

Several shops were torched and houses damaged in Tripura's Dhalai district following the death of a tribal youth in a group clash, prompting authorities to impose prohibitory orders, police said on Saturday.

The 19-year-old college student, who sustained serious injuries in a clash between two groups at Gandatwisa in Dhalai district on 7 July, passed away at GBP Hospital here on Friday.

Additional police personnel have been deployed in the village after Friday's arson and Internet services have been suspended in the area. Four people have been arrested in connection with the death of the youth, police said.

According to police sources, Parmeshwar Reang, accompanied by his friends, had visited the Gandatwisa market to attend a fair organised on the occasion of Rath Yatra.

Shops and houses were set on fire following the death of a youth, in Gandacherra, Tripura *PHOTO: PTI*

"Suddenly, a clash erupted between two groups of youths, during which Reang sustained severe injuries. Initially admitted to Gandatwisa hospital, he was later transferred to GBP hospital as his condition worsened. He succumbed to his injuries on Friday," Dhalai SP Avinash Rai told PTI.

"After his body was brought back to Gandatwisa, around 110km from Agartala, emotions ran high and some houses and shops were vandalised in anger," he added. —*PTI*

CIC HAS POWERS TO CONSTITUTE BENCHES, SAYS SC

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

The Central Information Commission (CIC) has powers to constitute benches and frame regulations, the Supreme Court has said while observing that the autonomy of CIC is of paramount importance for its effective functioning. A bench of Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Satish Chandra Sharma last Wednesday said the autonomy and independence of administrative bodies are fundamental to their ability to perform their designated functions effectively. Court said institutions like CIC are established to carry out specialised tasks that require a level of impartiality. —*PTI*

Jagannath temple's 'Ratna Bhandar' opens after 46 yrs

BHUBANESWAR, 13 JULY

The Odisha government is set to unlock the 'Ratna Bhandar', the revered treasury of Lord Jagannath temple in Puri, on Sunday after 46 years for an inventory of the ornaments and other valuables, officials said.

The treasury was last opened in 1978. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which looks after the maintenance of the 12th century shrine, will use the opportunity to carry out repairs, they added.

"We are fully prepared for the reopening of the Ratna Bhandar on Sunday. We will strictly adhere to the standard operating procedures (SOP) issued by the government in accordance with the Shree Jagannath Temple Act," Puri District Collector Siddharth Shankar Swain said. —*PTI*

The treasury was last opened in 1978 *PHOTO: PTI*

UNESCO HERITAGE SITE

Sat images reveal treasures lie beneath Mahabodhi temple

PATNA, 13 JULY

A geospatial analysis utilising satellite images and ground surveys has found evidence of the presence of "huge architectural wealth" buried in the Mahabodhi temple complex and its surroundings in Bihar's Bodh Gaya, officials said on Saturday.

The study has been carried out by the Bihar Heritage Development Society (BHDS), a wing of the Art, Culture and Youth Department, in collaboration with the Cardiff University of the United Kingdom.

Bengaluru-based National Institute of Advanced Studies faculty member MB Rajni, one of the project members, studied satellite images of the Mahabodhi temple and its surroundings and tried to correlate the findings with the description of 'Xuanzang', she said. "It's a huge architectural wealth that needs further excavation," the Art, Culture and Youth Department's Additional Chief Secretary Harjot Kaur Bamhrah told PTI. The UK-based varsity and the BHDS are cooperating in the project, 'Archaeology on the footsteps of the Chinese traveller Xuanzang'.

PHOTO: PTI

"Upon analysing satellite imagery, we identified two concentric squares...an outer square enclosing 4.9 acres and an inner one enclosing 2.5 acres. Between the outer and inner squares, there is a gap of about 15 metres and in the south and 20 meters in the east and the west," says the report of Rajni.

The Mahabodhi temple complex, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is one of the four holy areas related to the life of Lord Gautam Buddha. —*PTI*

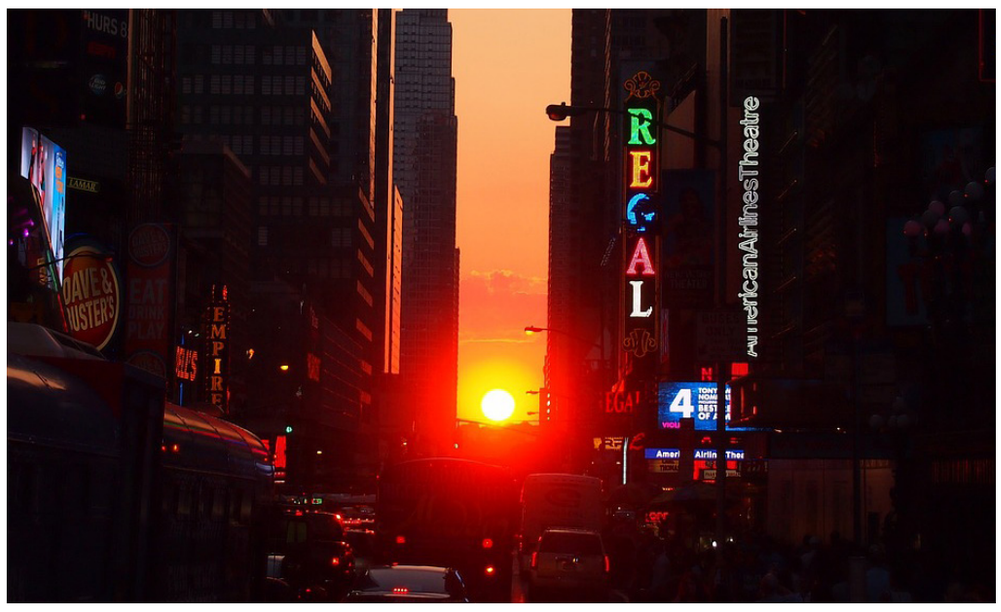
Haryana encounter: Police say 43 rounds fired in shootout

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

A total of 43 shots of bullets were exchanged in the shootout between gangsters and a joint team of Delhi and Haryana police in Sonipat that left three alleged gangsters dead and one Delhi Police SI injured, an official said.

The gangsters fired 24 shots as the police retaliated with 19 shots, the officer said a day after the shootout. Ashish alias Lalu, Sunny Kharar and Vicky Ridhana, all three hailing from Haryana, died in the shootout.

Ashish and Vicky allegedly also shot 26-year-old Aman Joon dead at a Rajouri Garden Burger King outlet on 18 June. After getting a tip-off, Special Commissioner of Police (crime) Shalini Singh said the team intercepted the trio travelling on a Kia Seltos car on Rohtak-Chinauli road around 8.40 pm. —*PTI*



MANHAHATTAN HENGE DAY

Manhattanhenge, also called the Manhattan Solstice, is an event during which the setting sun or the rising sun is aligned with the east–west streets of the main street grid of Manhattan, New York City. The sunsets and sunrises each align twice a year, on dates evenly spaced around the summer solstice and winter solstice. The sunset alignments occur around 28 May and 13 July

PHOTO: FREEPIK

6,500 teens in South Asia die giving birth every year

Adolescent mothers have a much higher risk of dying from maternal causes, compared to women in their 20s and 30s ***PHOTO: @UNICEF***

Every year, nearly 6,500 adolescent girls in South Asia die giving birth and most of them are minors who have limited power over their reproductive health or lives, according to a joint analysis done by UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA.

South Asia accounts for 290 million child brides - nearly half of the world's burden. In three countries in South Asia, they are also four times more likely to be out of school than their unmarried peers, as per the analysis done by United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organisation (WHO) and United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA).

At the two-day Regional Dialogue on Adolescent Pregnancy in South Asia, which concluded here on Friday, the SAARC countries, UNICEF South Asia, UNFPA and WHO called for increased commitment to critical services for over 2.2 million adolescent girls that give birth yearly in South Asia, a joint press release issued by the agencies said.

"I appreciate the role of governments, UN agencies, NGOs and civil society for the improvements made by the SAARC region over the years in reducing teenage pregnancy," said Ambassador Golam Sarwar, the Secretary General of SAARC.

According to the joint analysis, every year, nearly 6,500 adolescent girls die in childbirth in South Asia, according to an analysis by UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA. Most of them are child brides who have limited power over their reproductive health or lives.

When young girls give birth, their lives can be at risk as they are not yet physically ready to give birth. Thousands more girls are forced to drop out of school, face stigma, rejection, violence, unemployment as well as lifelong social challenges. 49 per cent of young girls in South Asia are not in education, employment or training – the highest in the world, the press release said.

"We must do better for adolescent girls, particularly those who are married, pregnant or parents. In addition to hurdles to learn, get good healthcare and eat nutritious food, they are denied the opportunity to build skills and start businesses -- everything they need as parents to thrive and fulfil their potential," said Sanjay Wijesekera, UNICEF Regional Director for South Asia.

"We must work together and invest in opportunities to unleash the promise of more than 170 million adolescent girls in South Asia. Doing so would be transformative for this region," he said.

Government and UN officials, adolescent girls, as well as civil society representatives from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have participated in the dialogue and reaffirmed their commitment to providing better services to support pregnant adolescent girls and young mothers.

The event held in Kathmandu over 11-12 July was jointly organised by SAARC, WHO, UNICEF, and UNFPA and was inaugurated by the Secretary General of SAARC, Ambassador Golam Sarwar.

Adolescent mothers have a much higher risk of dying from maternal causes, compared to women in their 20s and 30s.

"It is high time that we reverse this trend. The unique physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and sexual development during adolescence necessitates special attention in national and international policies. Effective strategies to tackle adolescent pregnancy require cross-sectoral collaboration and equitable access to a variety of services," said Saima Wazed, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia.

—PTI

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

Black holes growing slower as Universe ages

Black holes are remarkable astronomical objects with gravity so strong that nothing, not even light, can escape them. The most gigantic ones, known as "supermassive" black holes, can weigh millions to billions times the mass of the Sun.

These giants usually live in the centers of galaxies. Our own galaxy, the Milky Way, contains a supermassive black hole in its heart as well.

So, how do these supermassive black holes become super massive? To answer this question, our team of astrophysicists looked back in time across the universe's 13.8 billion-year history to track how supermassive black holes have grown from the early days to today.

We constructed a model of the overall growth history of supermassive black holes spanning the past 12 billion years.

How do supermassive black holes grow?

Supermassive black holes grow primarily in two ways. They can consume gas from their host galaxies in a process called accretion, and they can also merge with each other when two galaxies collide.

When supermassive black holes consume gas, they almost always emit strong X-rays, a type of high-energy light invisible to the naked eye. You've probably heard of X-rays at the dentist, where they are sometimes used to examine your teeth. The X-rays used by astronomers generally have lower energies than medical X-rays.

So how can any light, even invisible X-rays, escape from black holes? Strictly speaking, the light is not coming from the black holes themselves, but from the gas just outside them. When gas gets pulled toward a black hole, it heats up and shines to produce light, like X-rays. The more gas a supermassive black hole consumes, the more X-rays it will produce.

Thanks to the data accumulated over more than 20 years from three of the most powerful X-ray facilities ever launched into space – Chandra, XMM-Newton and eROSITA – astronomers can capture X-rays from a large number of accreting supermassive black holes in the universe.

This data allows our research team to estimate how fast supermassive black holes grow by consuming gas. On average, a supermassive black hole can consume enough gas to amount to about the mass of the Sun each year, with the exact value depending upon various factors.

For example, the data shows that a black hole's growth rate, averaged over millions of years, is strongly connected to the mass of all the stars in its host galaxy.

How often do supermassive black holes merge?

Besides feeding on gas, supermassive black holes can also grow by merging with each other to form a single, more massive black hole when galaxies collide.

Supercomputer cosmological simulations can predict about how often these events happen. These simulations aim to model how the universe grows and evolves over time. The countless galaxies flying through space are kind of like bricks, building up the universe.

These simulations show that galaxies and the supermassive black holes they host can undergo multiple mergers across the span of cosmic history.

Our team has tracked these two growth channels – gas consumption and mergers – using X-rays and supercomputer simulations, and then combined them to construct this overall growth history, which maps the growth of black holes across the universe over billions of years.

Our growth history revealed that supermassive black holes grew much faster billions of years ago, when the universe was younger.

Back in the early days, the universe contained more gas for supermassive black holes to consume, and supermassive black holes kept emerging. As the universe aged, the gas was gradually depleted, and supermassive black hole growth slowed. About 8 billion years ago, the number of supermassive black holes stabilized.

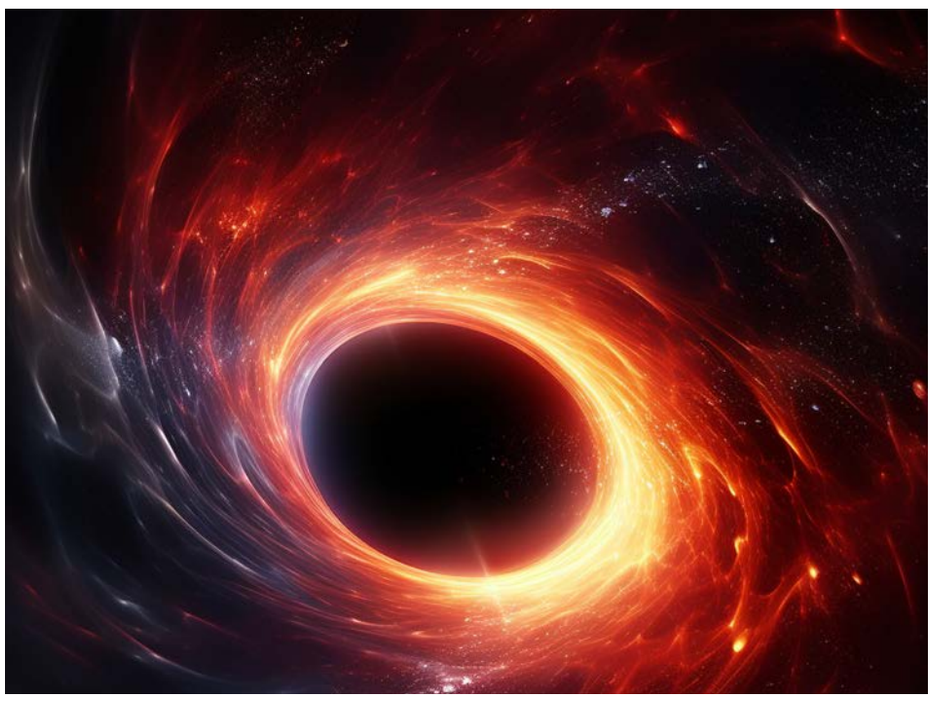
Looking forward

This research has helped us understand how over 90 per cent of the mass in black holes has accumulated over the past 12 billion years.

However, we still need to investigate how they grew in the very early universe to explain the remaining few percentages of the mass in black holes.

The astronomical community is starting to make progress exploring these early supermassive black holes, and we hope to find more answers soon.

—PTI



Our growth history revealed that supermassive black holes grew much faster billions of years ago, when the universe was younger ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

Biden's fans want to 'let Joe be Joe', but his stumbles are under a spotlight

President Joe Biden is on a public and private blitz to shake off concerns about his cognitive capacities.

But with public doubts about his fitness to serve unabating, Biden's every move is now under a withering microscope as any potential stumble risks becoming magnified and delivering another blow to his candidacy.

As he introduced Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at a NATO summit event on Thursday, Biden flubbed and called him "President Putin", prompting audible gasps from the audience.

He corrected himself, saying, "I'm so focused on beating Putin" before ceding the lectern. Shortly after, at a news conference, Biden errantly referred to "Vice President Trump" — a gaffe that overshadowed what his aides felt was otherwise a commanding performance.

And a significantly hyped interview with ABC's George Stephanopoulos a week earlier was meant to show Biden could handle scrutinizing questions from the media but only flared more concerns from Democrats about whether he could continue to serve as the party's nominee.

"If you are going to raise the stakes on one interview, it can't be another example of you being hard to understand — not because he's soft, not because he's mumbling, but because his train of thought doesn't make sense," former Obama White House aide Jon Lovett said on his podcast, "Pod Save America", this week, referring to the Stephanopoulos interview.

Still, getting Biden out there in more unscripted settings has been one consistent plea from Democrats who were rattled by his 90-minute debate on June 27 and are seeking assurances that the performance was an unusual blip and not a sign of broader mental decline. They want to see the handshakes, the glad-handling, the lengthy exchanges with journalists that had been characteristic of Biden, particularly during his 36 years in the Senate.

He's hopscotched from one event to another since: chatting up supporters at a Detroit restaurant; rallying voters in Wisconsin; stopping at a coffeeshop in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; taking some questions from donors, lawmakers and mayors in private virtual calls. He's hosted Democratic governors at the White House while picking up his pace of news interviews, including with Stephanopoulos, the Houston Chronicle and NBC News, which will air on Monday.

President Joe Biden has been making gaffes for the last 40 years ***PHOTO: PTI***

Yet some of his recent outings and meetings have left puzzling results.

In the Stephanopoulos interview, Biden said, "I don't think so, no" when asked whether he watched a replay of the debate. To the governors, he remarked on his need to sleep more and curtail evening events — a remark that, even if said in jest, did not project an image of an energetic commander in chief.

During an interview with WURD radio in Philadelphia, Biden tripped up and said, "I'm proud to be, as I said, the first vice president, the first Black woman to serve with a Black president" — scrambling some of his often-used lines about his pride in serving with the first Black president and choosing the first Black woman to be vice president. The slip came even after it was revealed that the interviewer had asked questions specifically offered up by the Biden campaign.

By no means has Biden been known as an error-proof politician during his decades in public life; rather, his gregarious political style has often been marked by verbal gaffes. But having Biden be out there more is a risk that his advisers are gambling is worth taking.

"Joe Biden has been making gaffes for 40 years. He made a couple last night. He'll probably continue to do so," Michael Tyler, the Biden campaign's communications director, said on Air Force One as the president travelled to Detroit on Friday. "Our opponent is somebody who every single day out on the stump is calling for a bloodbath if he loses, who's pleading to rule as a dictator on day one, and who's pledging to ban abortion nationwide across the country."

Biden's allies and aides contend that his direct engagement since the debate — whether it's voters in unscripted stops during his travels or with scores of mayors from across the country, none of whom voiced concerns about his fitness for office — have proven that the president is still up for the job.

On a call with mayors Wednesday evening, Lansing, Michigan, Mayor Andy Schor noted that although many mayors had their hands raised on the Zoom call, Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego ended the session after taking only three questions. Still, Schor noted that Biden was "rattling off thing after thing," all what mayors wanted to hear, and "he wasn't really doing it with notes".

"He's going to be running, and I think that we all need to be supporting him," Schor told The Associated Press.

Satya Rhodes-Conway, the mayor of Madison, Wisconsin, said she was struck by how much detail Biden went into on policy issues, adding, "I didn't realise that the president was a policy wonk."

Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., has also stressed that Biden must do more to convince voters that his debate performance was a one-off.

"I don't think he or the campaign should be reticent at all in directly engaging with voters or the media in an unscripted way," he said.

"Joe Biden's occasional gaffes have, in part, been what has made him so endearing and so popular because he's willing to talk in an authentic, off-the-cuff manner that a lot of politicians aren't willing to do."

During Biden's rally in Madison, Lisa Gellings and her son, Tim, were in an overflow room watching his remarks. Then the president popped in for a surprise visit. For them, seeing Biden in person was completely different than viewing his halting performance at the Atlanta debate.

"He isn't the best on TV," he said. "He's much better like this, talking to us."

—PTI

PHOTO: PTI

Court dismisses Alec Baldwin's 'shooting' trial

NEW MEXICO, 12 JULY

Alec Baldwin broke down in tears as a New Mexico judge dismissed the involuntary manslaughter case against him for a fatal shooting on the set of the film Rust. The trial collapsed three days into Baldwin's trial in Santa Fe, at a court just mile from where Halyna Hutchins, a cinematographer, was shot with a revolver that Baldwin was using in rehearsals. It is the second time the case against the actor has been dismissed since the October 2021 shooting. He will not be tried again. His lawyers alleged police and prosecutors hid evidence - a batch of bullets - that could have been connected to the shooting. team regardless. ***—BBC News***

Indian consulate in Seattle opens new visa centres

WASHINGTON, 13 JULY

India has launched two new visa and passport centres in Seattle city of Washington state of the US, catering to the needs of the Indian community living in nine Pacific Northwestern states of this country. The two centres in Seattle and Bellevue -- both in the Washington State -- inaugurated on Friday, come months soon after the opening of the newest Indian Consulate in Seattle. The other five existing Indian consulates are in New York, Atlanta, Chicago, Houston and San Francisco. "The opening of the Indian Consulate in Seattle is a reflection of the Indian government's strong commitment to deepen our relations with Pacific Northwestern states of USA," Prakash Gupta, Consul General of India in Seattle, said at the opening ceremony. ***—AP***

5 jailed for murder of Ecuador prez candidate

QUITO, 13 JULY

Five people have been jailed for the murder of presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio in 2023. A vocal anti-corruption activist and journalist, Fernando Villavicencio was shot dead as he left a campaign rally in the capital, Quito, last August. Carlos Angulo, the alleged leader of the Los Lobos gang, and Laura Castilla were sentenced to 34 years and eight months in prison. Two men and a woman were handed 12-year sentences for aiding a squad in the attack. The others - Erick Ramirez, Victor Flores and Alexandra Chimbo - were accused of helping squad. More than 70 people gave evidence including a key witness who said the gang had been offered more than USD 200,000 to kill Villavicencio. ***—BBC News***

1 dead after helicopter crashes off Hawaiian coast

HONOLULU, 13 JULY

A tour company helicopter crashed off the Hawaiian island of Kauai, police said, killing one person and leaving two missing in the latest in a series of crashes to plague the industry in recent years. A hiker on the Kalalau trail reported seeing the helicopter crash into the water about a quarter of a mile (0.4 km) off the Na Pali Coast on Thursday and called the fire department around 1.40pm, Kauai officials said in a statement. The Robinson R44 helicopter was part of Ali'i Kauai Air Tours & Charters, authorities said. Kauai lifeguards on personal watercraft recovered one person's body from the water. The US Coast Guard continued searching on Friday for the two people in the water. Their identities were not immediately released. Their identities were not immediately released. The National Transportation Safety Board will investigate. ***—AP***

Israeli attack on Gaza kills at least 71

Israeli official says the attacks targeted Mohammed Deif, head of Hamas' military wing

KHAN YOUNIS, 13 JULY

The Gaza Health Ministry said 71 people were killed in an Israeli attack on Saturday in the south of the war-stricken enclave.

The ministry said 289 others were injured in the attack that struck the Khan Younis area. It said that many of the injured and dead were taken to nearby Nasser Hospital.

At the hospital, Associated Press journalists counted over 40 bodies and witnesses there described an attack that included several strikes.

An Israeli official has confirmed that Mohammed Deif, the head of Hamas' military wing, was the target of Saturday's Israeli strike in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity pending a formal announcement, said Rafa Salama, another top Hamas official, was also targeted in the strike.

The official did not have details on whether the two targets were killed.

Palestinians check the bodies of their relatives killed in the Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip, on Saturday ***PHOTO: PTI***

It remains unclear if the attack landed inside Muwasi, an Israeli-designated humanitarian zone, which stretches from northern Rafah to Khan Younis. The coastal strip is where hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians have fled to in search of safety, sheltering mostly in makeshift tents.

Israel launched its campaign in Gaza after Hamas' on 7 October attack in which militants stormed into southern Israel, killed some 1,200 people - mostly civilians - and abducted about 250.

Since then, Israeli ground offensives and bombardments have killed more than 38,300 people in Gaza and wounded more than 88,000, according to the territory's Health Ministry. The ministry does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count. More than 80 per cent of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been driven from their homes.

Ismail al-Thawabta, Director-General of the Hamas Government Media Office, claimed that the Israeli military directed thousands of Palestinians in eastern Gaza City to move to western and southern neighbourhoods and then opened fire on them once they arrived.

United Nations Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric condemned the recovery of the bodies in Gaza City, calling it "yet another tragic example of the toll on civilians" in the ongoing conflict. ***—AP***

Argentina designates Hamas as terrorist group

BUENOS AIRES, 13 JULY

- The statement also mentioned Hamas' close ties to Iran, which Argentina blames for two deadly militant attacks on Jewish sites in the country

Argentina designated Hamas a terrorist organisation on Friday and ordered a freeze on the financial assets of the Palestinian group, a largely symbolic move as President Javier Milei seeks to align Argentina strongly with the US and Israel.

Announcing the decision, Milei's office cited the militant Palestinian group's cross-border attack on Israel last October 7 that killed some 1,200 people and took 250 others hostage, in the deadliest assault in Israel's 76-year history.

The statement also mentioned Hamas' close ties to Iran, which Argentina blames for two deadly militant attacks on Jewish sites in the country.

The move comes just days before the 30th anniversary of one of those attacks, the 1994 bombing of a Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires. It killed 85 people and wounded hundreds more in the worst such attack in Argentina's modern history. The other attack on the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, in 1992, killed more than 20 people. Argentina's judiciary has accused members of Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group of carrying out the two attacks. ***—AP***

Meta lifts restrictions on Trump's FB, Insta

WASHINGTON DC, 13 JULY

Meta has lifted the final restrictions on former US president Donald Trump's Facebook and Instagram accounts in the run up to US presidential elections in November.

The ex-US president and convicted felon's accounts were suspended in 2021 after he praised supporters who stormed the US Capitol on 6 January.

Trump's accounts, which combined have over 60 million followers, were re-instated in 2023 but subject to additional monitoring, which has now been removed. Meta said that US presidential candidates "remain subject to the same Community Standards as all Facebook and Instagram users, including those policies designed to prevent hate speech and incitement to violence."

Trump is the first former president to be convicted of a crime. ***—BBC News***

Donald Trump ***PHOTO: PTI***

MUSK DONATES NEARLY $250B TO PRO-TRUMP GROUP

WASHINGTON DC, 13 JULY

Tesla Chief Elon Musk, has given some of his nearly USD 250 billion fortune to a group supporting former President Donald Trump ahead of the election, according to Bloomberg, marking the billionaire's most stark show of support for the Republican party as he has become increasingly vocal about U.S. politics in the past year.

Musk donated to a Trump-supporting super political action committee known as America PAC, Bloomberg reported, citing unnamed people familiar with the matter who said a considerable amount of money was given.

The exact figure of the donation is unknown, though Musk. ***—Courtesy, Forbes***

BIDEN SIGNS RESOLVE TIBET ACT, STRENGTHENS US' TIBET POLICY

WASHINGTON DC, 13 JULY

US President Joe Biden on Friday signed "The Resolve Tibet Act" which states that China's ongoing occupation of Tibet must be resolved per the international law peacefully and not through repression.

Biden's government called on China to resume direct dialogue, without preconditions, with the Dalai Lama, or his representatives, to seek a settlement.

The act- Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, popularly known as the Resolve Tibet Act, states that it is American policy that the Tibet issue must be resolved in accordance with international law by peaceful means, through dialogue without preconditions.

It empowers Tibet to counter disinformation about Tibet from the Chinese government. ***—ANI***

132 INJURED

22 children killed in Nigeria school collapse

JOS, 13 JULY

Twenty-two children have died and at least 132 have been injured after a school building collapsed in Nigeria's central Plateau state, local officials say.

Saint Academy in the state capital Jos caved in while students were in class on Friday morning. Children were left trapped under the debris.

Volunteers used excavators, hammers and their bare hands to break through the piles of concrete and twisted iron rods to reach many of those trapped.

The school is believed to have more than 1,000 pupils.

Local resident Abel Fuandai said that his friend's son had been killed and said "the scale of the tragedy is frightening".

The state government said an investigation is underway and cited the school's "weak structure and unsafe location near a riverbank", advising other schools "with structural concerns" to close immediately.

It also advised hospitals in Jos to prioritise treating the injured, "regardless of documentation or payment".

People gather at the scene of a collapsed two-storey building in Jos, Nigeria, on Friday ***PHOTO: PTI***

Residents said the collapse came after three days of heavy rains in Plateau.

Speaking from hospital, injured student Wulliya Ibrahim said, "I entered the class not more than five minutes, when I heard a sound, and the next thing is I found myself here.

"We are many in the class, we are writing our exams," he said.

Resident Chika Obioha said he had seen a number of dead bodies.

There have been several major building collapses in Nigeria in recent years, with observers blaming a mix of bad workmanship, poor quality materials and corruption.

In 2021, at least 45 people were killed when a high-rise building under construction collapsed in a wealthy Lagos neighbourhood. ***—BBC News***

Pak says new IMF deal to help country's macroeconomic stability

ISLAMABAD, 13 JULY

Pakistan's Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Saturday said the USD 7 billion aid package deal struck with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) would help bring macroeconomic stability to the cash-strapped country.

IMF announced the aid package, spread over more than three years, late on Friday night, giving much-needed respite to the nation that has been facing chronic economic issues.

The programme needs to be approved by the IMF's Executive Board. The Washington-based international lender in a statement said the deal should enable Pakistan to "cement macroeconomic stability and create conditions for stronger, more inclusive and resilient growth".

PHOTO: PTI

The latest bailout package follows a commitment by the government to implement reforms, including a major effort to broaden the country's tax base, the Dawn newspaper reported on Saturday.

Aurangzeb said it would aid Pakistan in achieving macroeconomic stability.

Pakistan's economy has faced multiple challenges in the past few years, from the COVID-19 pandemic, the effects of the war in Ukraine and supply difficulties that fuelled inflation, as well as the devastating flooding that affected a third of the country in 2022, the Dawn said. ***—PTI***

UN-ISLAMIC MARRIAGE CASE

Imran Khan acquitted in illegal marriage case

ISLAMABAD, 13 JULY

A Pakistani court on Saturday acquitted jailed former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi in the un-Islamic marriage case, the only case keeping the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party founder behind bars.

On 3 February -- days before the general elections on 8 February -- an Islamabad court convicted the couple based on a complaint filed by Bushra Bibi's ex-husband, Khawar Fareed Maneka, who alleged that they contracted marriage during the former first lady's Iddat period.

In Islam, a woman can't remarry before completing four months after divorce or the death of her husband.

Imran Khan ***PHOTO: PTI***

The two had challenged the sentence in a district and session court of the capital Islamabad where Additional District and Sessions judge (ADSJ) Afzal Majoka heard the case. ***—PTI***

Man gets 226 yrs in deaths of 2 Alaska native women

ALAKSA, 13 JULY

A man who killed two Alaska Native women and recorded the torture of one, stating that in his movies "everybody always dies," was sentenced to 226 years in prison on Friday.

The accused, Brian Steven Smith received two 99-year sentences for the deaths of Kathleen Henry, 30, and Veronica Abouchuk, who was 52 when her family reported her missing in February 2019, seven months after they last saw her.

"Both were treated about as horribly as a person can be treated," Alaska Superior Court Judge Kevin Saxby said when imposing the sentence.

—Salar News with Agencies

TO RESTORE PEACE

UN condemns gang violence in Haiti

UNITED NATIONS, 13 JULY

The UN Security Council unanimously approved a resolution condemning "in the strongest terms" the increasing gang violence and criminal activity in Haiti that is undermining peace, stability and security in the country and the region.

Friday's resolution expresses grave concern at illegal arms and ammunition flowing into Haiti and their link to the expanding territorial control by gangs and "the extreme levels of armed violence", including sexual and gender-based violence, that lead to deteriorating security in the country.

The council extended the UN political mission in Haiti known as BINUH until July 15, 2025, with a mandate to support the advancement of "a Haitian-led, Haitian-owned political process towards the holding of free and fair legislative and presidential elections".

The gang violence in Haiti have grown in power since the 7 July, 2021, assassination of president Jovenel Moïse ***PHOTO: X/ @VOICE OF EUROPE***

The resolution, sponsored by the United States and Ecuador, reiterates the council's support for a Kenyan-led multinational security force to help the Haitian National Police re-establish security. The initial contingent of 200 Kenyan police arrived in the capital Port-au-Prince on June 25.

Haiti asked for an international force to combat gangs in 2022, and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appealed for months for a country to lead the force before the Kenyans came forward. The gangs have grown in power since the 7 July, 2021, assassination of President Jovenel Moïse and are now estimated to control up to 80 per cent of the capital. The surge in killings, rapes and kidnappings has led to a violent uprising by civilian vigilante groups. ***—AP***

Rescuers recover body of Indian in Nepal mudslide

KATHMANDU, 13 JULY

- Other missing Indian nationals are Santosh Thakur, Surendra Sah, Adit Miyaan, Sunil, Shahnawaj Alam, and Ansari

Rescuers in Nepal on Saturday recovered the body of a 40-year-old Indian national, the first from two buses that were swept by a mudslide into a rain-swollen river with more than 50 passengers.

The two buses carrying 54 passengers, including seven Indians, went missing in the Trishuli River in the landslides at the Simaltal area along the Narayanghat-Mugling road in Chitwan district on Friday. Three people swam to safety later.

The first body from the buses has been recovered from 50km away from the accident site. The deceased was Rishi Pal Shahi from India, police said.

The body was found half covered by sand in the Narayani River of Chitwan district, police said, adding that he was carrying an Indian ID.

Other missing Indian nationals are Santosh Thakur, Surendra Sah, Adit Miyaan, Sunil, Shahnawaj Alam, and Ansari.

The Nepali Army, Nepal Police and armed police personnel along with deep divers are being mobilised to resume the search operation. More than 500 security personnel are involved in the search operations, according to the police official. ***—PTI***

Domestic investors infuse $638M in realty sector

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Domestic investors pumped USD 637.9 million in the Indian real estate during April-June -- a fivefold jump on annual basis -- expecting better returns amid strong demand, according to Vestian. Real estate consultant Vestian on Saturday released data for institutional investments in real estate during the second quarter of 2024 calendar year. As per the data, institutional investments in the Indian real estate rose 96 per cent in April-June to USD 3.1 billion from USD 1.6 billion in the corresponding period of the previous year. As per the data, foreign investors infused USD 2,218.1 million in April-June as against USD 1,459.2 million in the year-ago period. Funds infused in real estate from domestic investors rose to USD 637.9 million from USD 127 million. Co-investments from both foreign and domestic investors increased to USD 260.2 million from USD 5.5 million. *—PTI*

Macrotech's booking sale grows to ₹4K cr

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Macrotech Developers has posted a 20 per cent growth in sale bookings to Rs 4,030 crore for the first quarter of this fiscal year as housing demand continues to be strong. Sale bookings of Macrotech Developers, which markets its properties under Lodha brand, stood at Rs 3,350 crore in the year-ago period. As per its latest operational update posted on stock exchanges, the collection from customers rose 12 per cent to Rs 2,690 crore in April-June FY25. Macrotech Developers, which has a significant presence in Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and Pune and has just entered Bengaluru, will launch 17 housing projects this fiscal year, having a revenue potential of Rs 12,000 crore, to boost sale bookings. The company will launch 10 projects and seven new phases in existing residential projects during 2024-25 across three cities. *—PTI*

Ports & Shipping Ministry approves ₹46.47L projects

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

The Union Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways (MoPSW) has approved a research proposal on 'Valorisation of Dredged Sediments'. According to a statement by the ministry on Saturday, the project has been sanctioned at an estimated cost of Rs 46,47,380. The 'Valorisation of dredged sediments' is the reuse of sediments as raw material for civil engineering and other purposes. It can be a sustainable solution to reduce the strain on natural resources and eliminate waste. "By converting dredged sediments into useful construction aggregates, we can address both environmental concerns and resource utilization efficiently," said Additional Secretary, Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways. This research initiative highlights an important advancement in sustainable maritime practices. Through the conversion of dredged sediments into useful construction aggregates, it efficiently addresses environmental concerns and resource utilisation. *—ANI*

K'taka has 3rd highest inflation at 5.98%

Odisha tops list with 7.22% & Bihar at 6.37%

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

The divergence highlights regional economic disparities as the country grapples with rising prices *PHOTO: PTI*

India's inflation landscape exhibited spatial variability in June 2024, with 12 out of 22 states reporting inflation rates exceeding the national average of 5.1 per cent, according to SBI research.

Odisha recorded the highest inflation at 7.22 per cent, followed closely by Bihar at 6.37 per cent and Karnataka at 5.98 per cent. This divergence highlights regional economic disparities as the country grapples with rising prices.

Concurrently, the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) surged to a seven-month high of 5.9 per cent in May, reflecting robust growth in mining (5.9 per cent), manufacturing (4.6 per cent), and a remarkable increase in electricity production (13.7 per cent).

These contrasting trends underscore the complex interplay between inflation and industrial performance across India.

The urban-rural inflation divide continued, with rural inflation increasing to 5.66 per cent and urban inflation rising to 4.39 per cent in June.

This persistent gap is driven by higher food prices and a greater weight of food items in the rural consumption basket (54.2 per cent) compared to urban areas (36.3 per cent).

The primary contributors to the inflation surge in June were food items, particularly vegetables, which saw a dramatic price increase of 29.32 per cent.

Pulses followed with a 16.07 per cent rise, while cereals contributed an 8.75 per cent inflation rate. These increases are largely attributed to climatic factors affecting vegetable and protein-based item prices.

On the supply side, the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) rose to a seven-month high of 5.9 per cent in May, up from a revised 5.4 per cent in April.

This growth was driven by a 5.9 per cent increase in mining, a 4.6 per cent rise in manufacturing, and a significant 13.7 per cent boost in electricity production. *—ANI*

COAL CRISIS

Power plants struggle amid coal shortages in North India

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

The coal shortage has severe implications for the power supply *PHOTO: PTI*

Northern India, particularly the states of Punjab and Rajasthan, is facing a critical energy challenge. Power plants in these regions are grappling with severe coal shortages, leading to operational disruptions and posing a significant threat to the stability of the power supply.

Current Situation

In June, the coal materialization rate, which refers to the actual supply of coal against the contracted quantity, plummeted to a mere 45 per cent. This shortfall has left power plants with coal stocks significantly below the required levels. Some of the thermal power plants in Punjab currently have only four days of coal stock, while plants in Rajasthan are operating with less than five days of reserves.

Impact on Power Supply

The coal shortage has severe implications for the power supply in northern India. With coal reserves dwindling, power plants are struggling to meet the region's electricity demands, which have surged to over 16,000 MW due to the rising mercury levels and the ongoing paddy season.

Causes of the Shortage

Several factors have contributed to the current coal crisis. Firstly, logistical challenges in coal transportation have hindered the timely delivery of coal to power plants. Additionally, there has been an overall increase in coal demand across the country, putting further strain on the supply chain.

Government Response and Actions Needed

The government has acknowledged the severity of the coal shortage and is taking steps to address the issue. Measures are being implemented to improve coal transportation logistics, such as increasing the number of coal rakes and ensuring timely dispatches.

Conclusion

The coal shortage in northern India, particularly in Punjab and Rajasthan, has exposed the vulnerabilities in the region's power supply chain. With coal stocks at critically low levels, power plants are struggling to meet the surging electricity demands, threatening the stability of the power supply. *—PTI*

Net investment by Foreign Portfolio Investors has increased to Rs 15,352 cr *PHOTO: PTI*

Foreign investors infuse ₹7,390 cr, total at ₹15,352 cr

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI) in the Indian equity market increased by Rs 7,390 crores during the second week of July, according to investment data from the National Securities Depository Limited.

The data also pointed out that the net investment by Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) in July has increased to Rs 15,352 crores. Before that during the first week of July, FPIs infused Rs 7,962 crores into the Indian equity market.

Foreign Institutional Investors were sellers in January, April, and May, cumulatively selling equities worth around Rs 60,000 crores. However, they were buyers in February, March, and June, with cumulative purchases amounting to Rs 63,200 crores.

Last month in June, the FPIs turned net buyers in Indian markets after two months of selling. In June, FPIs injected a net investment of Rs 26,565 crore into Indian equities, following initial selling earlier in the month after the announcement of election results.

This trend of outflows created selling pressure in the Indian equity market. But now, the surge in FPI investments points to the renewed confidence by investors in India's market potential and economic outlook. Now the investors will monitor the upcoming budget by the central government and the markets will react accordingly. *—ANI*

DECISION AWAITED

Govt mulls giving MTNL ops to BSNL; merger unlikely

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Sources say MTNL's merger with BSNL is not an option *PHOTO: PTI*

The government is considering the option of handing over operations of Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd (MTNL) to BSNL through an agreement, instead of pursuing a merger route, a source privy to the development said.

A final call on this is likely to be taken in a month's time.

The source said the option of handing over debt-laden MTNL's operations to Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) through an agreement is being looked into. The source said that given MTNL's high debt, a merger with BSNL was not a favourable option.

Once the decision is taken, the proposal would be placed before the Committee of Secretaries, and thereafter taken to the Cabinet.

Amid mounting financial woes, MTNL this week informed in a statutory filing that it is unable to make interest payment to certain bondholders "due to insufficient funds".

In view of the provisions of TPA, it is informed that due to insufficient funds, MTNL could not fund the Escrow account with adequate amount, the corporation said in the BSE filing.

Even as private telcos like Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel have scaled their subscriber tally in past months capitalising on Indian users' massive appetite for data and voice services, the customer base of MTNL has been dwindling - from just 4.66 million (wireless and wireline) in January-March 2023 to 4.1 million a year later.

MTNL's losses mounted to Rs 3,267.5 crore in FY24 from Rs 2,915.1 crore in FY23. PTI *—PTI*

Direct tax mop-up rises 20% on higher corporate tax

NEW DELHI, 12 JULY

Net direct tax collection grew 19.54 per cent to over Rs 5.74 lakh crore so far this fiscal on higher advance tax payment by corporates.

The first instalment of advance tax, which was due on June 15, rose 27.34 per cent to Rs 1.48 lakh crore. This includes Corporation Income Tax (CIT) at Rs 1.14 lakh crore and Personal Income Tax (PIT) at Rs 34,470 crore.

The net direct tax collection of Rs 5,74,357 crore (as of July 11, 2024) includes CIT at Rs 2,10,274 crore and PIT at Rs 3,46,036 crore, as per data released by Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) on Saturday. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

With 4 million users, Digi Yatra to expand in 15 new airports

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Total airports having Digi Yatra facility will increase to 29 *PHOTO: ANI*

The registered users at the Digi Yatra platform has crossed 4 million mark, highlighted the platform in an official statement on Saturday.

It also added that the operations of the Digi Yatra will soon be expanded to an additional 15 airports, currently, it is operational at 14 airports. After the new expansion, the total number of airports having Digi Yatra facility will increase to 29 airports.

Initially, it was started in three cities in Delhi, Bengaluru, and Varanasi, later it expanded its footprint across major airports in the country, including Mumbai, Hyderabad, Pune and Kolkata.

Digi Yatra is a biometric-based app that allows passengers to use their face as a boarding pass to pass through airport checkpoints without an identity card or boarding pass.

The achievement of 4 million users highlights the platform's transformative impact on air travel by leveraging cutting-edge technology built on a Privacy-Preserving ecosystem using Verifiable Credentials stored in a Secure Wallet and Decentralised Identifiers on a layer of trust of a Distributed Ledger. *—PTI*

Gender pay gap: 63% face disparity

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

PHOTO: PIXABAY

- The 2024 Compensation and Benefits Survey by ANSR and Talent500 reveals that over 80 per cent of India's leading tech talent seek improvements in their compensation and benefits packages

A pan-India survey of over 6,000 technology professionals uncovers the evolving strategies for attracting and retaining top talent. The 2024 Compensation and Benefits Survey by ANSR and Talent500 reveals that over 80 per cent of India's leading tech talent seek improvements in their compensation and benefits packages.

Beyond competitive salaries, personalised benefits, a focus on well-being, and clear career development opportunities have become the key drivers of employee satisfaction and retention. Flexibility and well-being remain paramount, with hybrid work options and mental health support distinguishing the best employers.

Apart from predictable compensation structures that offer stability, the survey highlighted the essential role of additional factors in fostering inspiration and retention among top talent in India's tech industry.

The report highlights a significant shift in priorities among tech talent, with 61% of respondents emphasizing the importance of customizable health benefits programs. A staggering 77 per cent of tech professionals value hybrid work arrangements, urging companies to optimize benefits packages for hybrid work.

Over 60 per cent of employees feel unfairly compensated, citing substantial pay disparities that underscore an urgent need for action.

Tech professionals highlight the critical importance of Learning and Development (L&D) programs. Over 90 per cent of respondents view career pathing and L&D initiatives as indispensable factors when assessing potential employers. Moreover, 81 per cent of employees express a preference for mentorship programs and stretch roles, indicating a strong interest in career advancement and leadership opportunities. *—PTI*

Sunteck Realty Q1 sale bookings up 30% to ₹502 cr

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Sunteck Realty Ltd has posted a 30 per cent increase in its sale bookings to Rs 502 crore for April-June FY25 driven by strong housing demand. The company had sold properties worth Rs 387 crore in the year-ago period. It collected Rs 342 crore from customers in the first quarter of 2024-25 fiscal as against Rs 288 crore in the year-ago period, according to a regulatory filing on Friday. Sunteck Realty sold properties worth Rs 1,915 crore and collected Rs 1,236 crore from customers. All the listed real estate developers have been achieving strong sale bookings post COVID on account of surge in demand from end-users & investors. *—PTI*

AMID SUPPLIES FROM SOUTH

Tomato prices may ease this week

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Prices of tomato are high in Delhi & other cities *PHOTO: PTI*

Retail tomato price, which soared to Rs 75 per kg in the national capital, is expected to cool in the coming weeks as supply improves from southern states, a government official said on Saturday.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said prices of potato and onion, which also spiked due to supply disruptions, are expected to stabilize soon.

"Prices of tomato, potato and onion are ruling high in Delhi and some other cities. Extreme heat followed by spells of excess rainfall disrupted supplies, causing a spike in prices in consuming areas," the consumer affairs ministry official told PTI.

Tomato price in New Delhi has surged to Rs 75 per kg, but is likely to ease if heavy rainfall does not further disrupt supply chains, he said.

According to the ministry data, retail tomato price in Delhi was Rs 75/kg on 12 July, down from Rs 150/kg in the year-ago period. In Mumbai, the price was Rs 83/kg, while Kolkata reported it at Rs 80/kg.

The all-India average retail price of tomato stood at Rs 65.21/kg on July 12, compared to Rs 53.36/kg last year.

Currently, Delhi is receiving tomato supplies from Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. "Prices will start easing as hybrid tomatoes from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka reach the national capital," the official said.

The government does not plan to reintroduce subsidized tomato sales, a measure implemented last year when the price exceeded Rs 110 per kg. The official exuded confidence that prices would normalize within 1-2 weeks as supplies improve from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

The government remains optimistic about price stabilisation in the coming weeks, provided there is no further disruption. *—PTI*

EU says X's blue tick accounts could deceive users

BRUSSELS, 13 JULY

Elon Musk's social media site X has been accused by the European Union of breaching its online content rules, with its "verified" blue tick accounts having the potential to "deceive" users.

The bloc's tech regulator said users could be duped into thinking the identity of those with blue tick marks was verified, when in fact anybody can pay for a blue tick. It said it had found evidence of "malicious actors" abusing the system.

The investigation began under the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA).

It could lead to X being fined up to 6 per cent of its global annual turnover and being forced to change how it operates in the bloc.

The billionaire, who bought the platform for $44bn in 2022, said DSA rules amounted to "censored speech" which he said he found unacceptable.

The findings follow a seven month investigation under the DSA.

The law, which was introduced in 2022, requires big tech firms, like X, to take action to stop illegal content and safeguard the public.

ByteDance's TikTok, AliExpress and Meta Platforms are also being investigated under the act.

The Commission said its review of X had found a lack of transparency around advertising and that X did not provide data for research use as required under EU rules. *—BBC News*

WIMBLEDON 2024

Krejcikova garners glory with her 1st Wimbledon title

Barbora Krejcikova wins her second Grand Slam trophy

LONDON, 13 JULY

Barbora Krejcikova won Wimbledon for her second Grand Slam title with a 6-2, 2-6, 6-4 victory over Jasmine Paolini in the final on Saturday. She kept insisting that nobody — not her friends, not her family, not even herself — would believe she won Wimbledon for her second Grand Slam title. Krejcikova is a 28-year-old from the Czech Republic who adds this trophy to her championship at the French Open in 2021.

She was unseeded in Paris back then and was only the 31st of 32 seeds at the All England Club after illness and a back injury this season limited her to a 7-9 record entering this tournament.

Barbora Krejcikova **PHOTO: X/@WIMBLEDON**

Krejcikova is the eighth woman to leave Wimbledon as the champion in the past eight editions of the event. Last year's champion also is from the Czech Republic: unseeded Marketa Vondrousova, who lost in the first round last week.

The seventh-seeded Paolini was the runner-up at the French Open last month and is the first woman since Serena Williams in 2016 to get to the finals at Roland Garros and Wimbledon in the same season. "It's unreal what just happened," Krejcikova said in her victory speech. "It's the best day of my tennis career and the best day of my life." The result is a second straight Grand Slam final defeat for Paolini, who fell to Iga Swiatek in straight sets in last month's Roland Garros showpiece. The 28-year-old was bidding to become Italy's first women's singles champion at Wimbledon.

—AP/ BBC News

Djokovic, Alcaraz face off yet again at Wimbledon final

LONDON, 13 JULY

Carlos Alcaraz and Novak Djokovic **PHOTO: @WIMBLEDON/INSTAGRAM**

Match starts at 6.30 pm

Carlos Alcaraz is only a couple of months past his 21st birthday, and yet this whole Grand Slam success thing is already a bit been-there, done-that for him. Moving a step closer to a second consecutive Wimbledon trophy and fourth major championship overall, Alcaraz overcame a shaky start Friday to beat Daniil Medvedev 6-7 (1), 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 in the semifinals at Centre Court.

"I feel like I'm not new anymore. I feel like I know how I'm going to feel before the final. I've been in this position before," Alcaraz said.

"I will try to do the things that I did well last year and try to be better." Like last year, his opponent in Sunday's title match will be Novak Djokovic, who advanced with a 6-4, 7-6 (2), 6-4 victory against No. 25 seed Lorenzo Musetti. Djokovic won 15 of 16 points when he went to the net in the first set and finished 43 for 56 in that category.

It'll be the first time the same two men meet in consecutive Wimbledon finals since Djokovic beat Roger Federer in 2014 and 2015.

"He's as complete a player as they come," Djokovic said about Alcaraz, who won the 2023 final in five sets. "It's going to take the best of my abilities on the court overall to beat him." Djokovic, who hadn't reached a final at any tournament all season and needed surgery in June for a torn meniscus in his right knee, will be vying for his eighth championship at the All England Club.

PTI

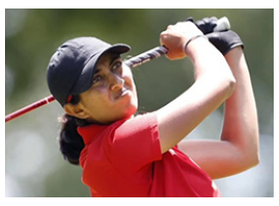


PHOTO: PTI

Aditi Ashok advances, Diksha exits at Evian

EVIAN LES BAINS, 22 MAY

Aditi Ashok assured herself of the cut but fellow Indian Diksha Dagar withdrew before the truncated second round on medical grounds at the Amundi Evian Championship here. Play was suspended on the day due to lightning in the area. The officials met twice to see if resumption was possible but the storm continued to intensify with heavy rain, thunder, and lightning. Aditi added 1-under 70 to her first round 71 and was 1-under for 36 holes and T-44th up from overnight T-52. The second round is yet to finish.—*PTI*

Sharma qualifies; Theegala ties 5th at Scottish Open

NORTH BERWICK, 13 JULY

India's Shubhankar Sharma squeezed inside the cut line at the Scottish Open, landing an eagle in his second round for a 2-under 68 here. Shubhankar is currently tied for 63rd with a total of 3-under, where the cut fell. He had carded a 1-under 69 in the first round. Indian-American Sahith Theegala, who is also getting ready for next week's Open, shot 66 despite a double bogey on Par-4 18th on his card. With 66-65, he was 9-under for a tied fifth and just three behind Swedish youngster, Ludvig Aberg, who is growing into a top star. Aberg carded a second consecutive round of 64 to take a one-shot lead into the weekend.—*PTI*

Arjun Atwal makes cut at Kaulig Companies C'ship

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Indian golfer Arjun Atwal has cut at the Kaulig Companies Championship, which is taking place at Firestone Country Club. Atwal posted a 1-over 71 in the second round, featuring two birdies and three bogeys, after shooting a 4-over 74 in the first round. This places him at 5-over 145, tied for 49th position. New Zealander Steven Alker took the low round of the day with a 65, giving him a one-stroke lead over 18-hole co-leader Steve Stricker heading into the weekend. Alker, with scores of 68-65 to be 7-under, is on the hunt for his ninth win on the PGA Tour Champions and his second of the 2024 season. Alker aims to become the fifth multi-time winner on the PGA Tour Champions this season, joining Stephen Ames, Ernie Els, Padraig Harrington, and Richard Bland. He also eyes his second senior major title, the first being the 2022 Senior PGA Championship. Steve Stricker trails closely.
—*PTI*

Anahat, Tiana enter 3rd round of WJ squash

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Young Anahat Singh has stormed into the girls' third round of the World Junior Squash Championships in Houston. The 16-year-old women's national champion, seeded 5/8, on Friday, eased past South African Dene Van Zyl 11-3 11-2 11-6 in the second round following a first-round bye. She will next meet Samantha Jaffe (17/32) of the US. Compatriot Tiana Parasrampuria (17/32) also advanced to the third round with a 14-12 11-5 11-5 win over Emma Merson of New Zealand, while five Indian boys recorded first-round victories. —*PTI*

Anahat Singh **PHOTO: X/@SCOTTISH_SQUASH**

ICC TO DISCUSS EXPENSES OF US LEG OF T20 WC

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

The United States leg of the T20 World Cupis believed to have exceeded the budget and the all-powerful ICC Board willdiscuss the losses suffered when it meets during the Annual Conference of theworld governing body in Colombo on 19 July.

Since the auditing isn't complete, it is difficult to quote afigure of losses as the amount received through gate receipts (ticketing) isyet to be fully computed. It has been learned that Tournament Director Chris Tetley hasresigned but according to sources aware of the developments, the 49-year-oldEnglishman had decided to put in his papers even before the start of thetournament."

Many members aren't happy with Tetley's performance. He hadtendered his resignation but it can't be said that the USA leg of the T20 World Cuphas got anything to do with it," an ICC board source told PTI onconditions of anonymity." —*PTI*

EURO 2024 FINAL

Spain eye record 4th title, England look to end 58-year drought

BERLIN, 13 JULY

Spain and England meet in the final of the European Championship on Sunday. Spain is seeking a record fourth title at the Euros to break a tie with Germany, while England is bidding for a first major trophy in men's soccer since the 1966 World Cup.

Here's what to know about the match:

Match facts— Spain will start as the favorite after winning all six of its matches at Euro 2024 and being widely regarded as the best team at the tournament.

Lamine Yamal is Spain's new star having set up three goals before the semifinals, where he scored a spectacular long-range strike in the victory over France all at the age of 16. He turned 17 on Saturday, the day before the final. Spain last appeared in a final at a major tournament in 2012, when the team won the third of its European Championship titles by beating Italy 4-0.

England played in the final of Euro 2020, which was played in 2021 because of the coronavirus pandemic, and lost in a penalty shootout to Italy.

England has shown resilience by coming from behind in all three of its knockout-stage matches at Euro 2024. Jude Bellingham scored an equalizer from an overhead kick in the fifth minute of stoppage time in the extra-time win over Slovakia in the last 16, Bukayo Saka equalized in the 80th minute against Switzerland in the quarterfinals before England won a penalty shootout, and substitute Ollie Watkins scored a winner almost exactly on 90 minutes against the Netherlands in the semifinals.

England coach Gareth Southgate is often criticized for his in-game management but he has changed the culture inside the squad and is regularly getting the team deep at major tournaments.

Team news— Spain captain Alvaro Morata has been in training this week after limping out of the semifinal win over France after being knocked to the ground in the post-match celebrations by a steward trying to stop a pitch invader.

Southgate has to decide who to play at left-back or left wingback out of Kieran Trippier or Luke Shaw. Shaw is a natural on that side but has only made two appearances as a second-half substitute at Euro 2024 after recovering from an injury that had sidelined him since February. Otherwise, Southgate will choose the same players, with the 19-year-old Kobbie Mainoo having nailed down the problematic spot in central midfield alongside Declan Rice.

There are six players on a tournament-high three goals at Euro 2024 and two are playing in the final: England captain Harry Kane and Spain playmaker Dani Olmo. The others are Georges Mikautadze of Georgia, Cody Gakpo of the Netherlands, Ivan Schranz of Slovakia, and Jamal Musiala of Germany. It has been six years since Spain and England met in a senior men's international. In 2018, they played a Nations League double-header, with Spain winning 2-1 at Wembley Stadium and England winning 3-2 in Sevilla a month later.

Bielsa says players deserve an apology, not sanctions

Marcelo Bielsa **PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA**

Uruguay coach Marcelo Bielsa thinks his players deserve an apology, not sanctions, for going into the stands atBank of America Stadium and participating in a fight with Colombia fansfollowing his team's 1-0 Copa America semifinal loss. An angry Bielsa criticized tournament organizers for not doingenough to protect the families of players seated behind the Uruguay bench andhe justified players taking matters into their own hands to protect their lovedones. —*PTI*

India beat Zimbabwe by 10 wickets in 4th T20, wins series

HARARE, 13 JULY

Yashasvi Jaiswal's flair was complemented by skipper Shubman Gill's poise as the young Indian team cantered to a 10-wicket victory over Zimbabwe in the fourth T20 International, taking an unassailable 3-1 lead in the five-match series.

This is the second time that India beat Zimbabwe by 10 wickets after a similar margin win at the same venue in 2016.

Jaiswal and Gill's approach was in complete contrast as the Mumbai southpaw went hammer and tongs during his unbeaten 93-run knock while the skipper (58 not out) was ready to play the second fiddle in a chase of 153 which was completed in 15.2 overs.

There was no way that Zimbabwe could have stopped the run-feast as towards the end, the bigger interest was whether the two flag-bearers of Indian batting into the next decade could reach their milestones of half-century and century. Earlier, India who won the toss, decided to bowl. They restricted Zimbabwe to 152-7 in 20 overs. Sikandar Raza top-scored 46 off 28 balls with 2 fours and 3 sixes. Tadiwanashe Marumani was the second top scorer for the hosts with 32 runs off 31 deliveries (3 fours). The Indian bowlers starting with Khaleel Ahmed picked up two wickets while Tushar Deshpande, Washington Sundar, Abhishek Sharma, and Shivam Dube got one wicket each.

— Salar news with agencies

Indian batsman Yashasvi Jaiswal, left and Shubman Gill celebrate after winning the T20 cricket match between Zimbabwe and India at the Harare Sports club **PHOTO:PTI**

ODI & T20IS: BCCI REVISES INDIA'S SRI LANKA TOUR

MUMBAI, 13 JULY

The schedule of India's upcoming white-ball tour of Sri Lanka has been revised, and the start of the contest pushed back by a day to 27 July, the BCCI said on Saturday.

The Indians will be touring the island nation later this month for three T20 Internationals and as many ODIs.

Originally, the first match a T20 International was to be played on 26 July, but it will now be held on 27 July, followed by the remaining two T20 games on 28 July and 30 July, with all the ties to be played at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium.

The ODis, initially scheduled to start on August 1, will now begin on 2 August, followed by the remaining matches on 4 August and 7 August. —*PTI*

Women's CPL: Jhulan joins TKR as mentor

MUIMBAI, 13 JULY

Jhulan Goswami **PHOTO: PTI**

Ahead of the 2024 Women's Caribbean Premier League (WCPL), legendary India fast-bowler Jhulan Goswami joins Trinbago Knight Riders (TKR) as a mentor. Jhulan picked 355 wickets across formats in an illustrious career for India before retiring in 2022.

"It's an honour to join such a quality franchise. They have done so well in India and around the world. To join TKR Women at the WCPL is a pleasure. Thanks to KKR management for thinking about me as a mentor and I'm looking forward to participating in this tournament."

"Meeting King Khan (Shah Rukh Khan) is always special. His passion and support for Knight Riders is genuinely incredible. The main conversation of me joining TKR Women started with Venky Sir (Venky Mysore)."

"As a management head, the way he takes care of everyone is amazing. I felt honoured by the way both welcomed me and spoke to me. It was really special meeting both Shahrukh sir and Venky sir," said Jhulan to the TKR website.

The side recently roped in India duo of Jemimah Rodrigues and Shikha Pandey, as well as multiple World Cups-winning Australian players Meg Lanning and Jess Jonassen in its squad for the upcoming season. —*PTI*

IN SEARCH OF GLORY

Prep should be a continuous process: Ex-Olympians

KOLKATA, 13 JULY

India's preparation for the Olympics shouldbe a continuous process and the authorities should not wake up just monthsbefore the commencement of the 'greatest show on earth', former Olympians said.

They were speaking at a panel discussion here "In search ofglory: India's prospects in the 2024 Olympics" organized by the Indian Chamberof Commerce at a city hotel on Friday night. Hockey icon Gurbux Singh, a member of the gold-winning hockey teamin the 1964 Olympics and the bronze-winning team in the 1968 Olympics underscored theimportance of inculcating a sports culture among the youth, to have sportinginfrastructure and grounds at every educational institution."

We wake up when the Olympics comes. The whole country wakesup. That attitude must change," he said, adding that 90 percent ofparents want their children to pursue vocations other than sports.About India's prospects in hockey in the 2024 Olympics, Singhsaid, "We are in a difficult group and our first target should be tosecure a berth in the semi-final. One important thing should be when you go forthe match you only have win in mind."

Gymnast Dipa Karmakar, who missed the bronze narrowly in the 2016Rio Olympics by finishing fourth at the vault event, said: "One shouldhave the willpower to achieve everything..."Recalling how a former foreign coach had discouraged her fromtrying the difficult vault event in gymnastics, Karmakar asked every aspiringgirl to turn every disadvantage and adversity in her favor, fight anydiscrimination, and make the motherland proud. —*PTI*

Professional chess player Pravin Thipsay with Gymnast Dipa Karmakar, former hockey player Gurbux Singh and others at a talk show in Kolkata **PHOTO: ANI**

Antim and Aman will be seeded wrestlers at Paris Olympics

PARIS, 13 JULY

World Championships bronze medallist Antim Panghal (women's 53kg) and immensely talented Aman Sehrawat (men's freestyle 57kg) have been seeded fourth and sixth in their respective weight categories which should help them avoid tough rivals in the initial bouts of the wrestling competition at the Paris Olympics. The wrestling events will commence on August 5 and conclude on 11 August, the last day of the Games.This is the first time wrestling events will have seedings at the Olympics. —*PTI*